













# **STUDIES IN GANDHISM**

**NIRMAL KUMAR BOSE**

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## Corrigenda

<i>Page</i>	<i>Abbreviations,</i>	<i>for Natesan</i>	<i>read Speeches.</i>
	<i>Line</i>	<i>For</i>	<i>Read</i>
21	39	forty	thirty
67	14	2nd their	there
136	25	1952	1955
149	16	1930	1920
158	19-20	Correspondence	Controversy
185	30	down	done
197	24	at	as
200	24	1942	1943
243	31	lead	led
247	14	1939	1945
276	38	finiish sted	it is finished
283	29	1947	1957
288	33	1957	1952
307	2	Tagore-Gandhi	Truth called them
		Correspondence	differently (Tagore-Gandhi Controversy).



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OTHER BOOKS BY THE  
AUTHOR

**My Days with Gandhi**

**Selections from Gandhi**

**Gandhi-Charit** (in Bengali)

**Gandhiji ki Chan** (in Bengali)

**Swaraj O Gandhibad** (in Bengali, out of print)

## ABBREVIATIONS

- Auto** — The Story of my Experiments with Truth.  
Second Edition. May, 1943.  
Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad.
- CB** — Congress Bulletin, issued by the All India Congress  
Committee. Swaraj Bhavan, Allahabad.
- CP** — Constructive Programme : Its meaning and place  
by M. K. Gandhi. Navajivan Publishing House,  
Ahmedabad. December, 1945.
- Gandhiji** — Gandhiji : His life and work. Published on his  
75th Birthday, October 2, 1944.  
Karnatak Publishing House, Bombay.
- GC** — Gandhiji's Correspondence with the Government  
1942-44. Second Edition, September, 1945.  
Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad.
- H** — Harijan, 1934 onwards.
- IAR** — The Indian Annual Register, Published by N. N.  
Mitra, Annual Register Office, Calcutta.
- IHR** — Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule by M. K.  
Gandhi. Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad,  
1944.
- Natesan** — Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi.  
Fourth Edition. G. A. Natesan & Co., Madras.
- SA** — Satyagraha in South Africa by M. K. Gandhi.  
S. Ganesan, Triplicane, Madras, 1928.
- Selections** — Selections from Gandhi by N. K. Bose.  
Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad.
- Tagore** — Young India 1919-1922, Tagore & Co.  
Madras, 1922.
- YI** — Young India, 1919-1932.





## **CHAPTER ONE**

# **INTRODUCTION TO GANDHISM**

I have tried to study Gandhi's writings with care and reverence ; and have endeavoured to keep my mind free, as far as possible, from personal likes and dislikes, so that the meaning of what Gandhi wrote may appear more clearly to me. But in offering the present introduction, I may perhaps be pardoned if I place along with Gandhi's views, a few personal observations by way of comment or criticism. The reader will then be able to understand the mind of one with whom he is about to undertake a long and perhaps tiresome journey.

### **Philosophy of History**

Let us begin with what might be termed Gandhi's philosophy of history, i. e. the lesson which he drew from the succession of historical events. Gandhi was one of those who subscribed to the view that in spite of temporary set-backs the human race has, on the whole, been marching forward. In other words, the spirit of brotherhood or a sense of human unity has been steadily growing in course of time.<sup>1</sup>

We shall try to discuss this opinion a little while later. But before doing so, it is necessary to deal with a similar view

held by political philosophers of a different school. Many of my Marxian acquaintances entertain the opinion like Gandhi that human society is steadily progressing forwards ; this being the effect of the operation of some natural law which can also be traced in biological, and even physical evolution. Where Gandhi spoke of God, the Marxian speaks of History, or of Nature.

When we observe the entire range of man's past achievements, a steady and considerable measure of progress becomes obvious, whatever may be the standard chosen for purposes of comparison. But the progress has not perhaps penetrated deeply ; it has not substantially affected the inborn capacities of the individual. For instance, a child born in an isolated Asiatic home does not seem to have a different fund of instincts than one born in a highly civilized West European atmosphere. Yet the manner in which their respective conducts are modified by social climate is markedly different. The mind which has to adapt itself to a wider range of social relations and personal situations shows a greater range of flexibility and richness than another which is stimulated by a narrower range of collective experiences.

It would therefore not be unreasonable to suppose that the mind of modern man, who has inherited a vast accumulation of cultural materials, would be superior to the mind of one who lived in prehistoric times. But this is not the same thing as believing in the inborn superiority of modern over primitive men. The observed progress has been chiefly due to the piling up of culture and of subjective adaptation to it.

Moreover, one has to remember that the majority of mankind to-day is denied the privilege of sharing in that culture on account of inequalities of opportunity ; and they remain no more cultured than primitive men. And even where sharing has become possible, the degree of mental development may remain at a rather superficial level. For when passions are roused, even 'civilized' people lapse into a barbarity which would shame animals. Individuals can, and sometimes do, show restraint even under such circumstances if they have already accustomed themselves in guiding their actions in

conformity with a higher purpose and not by self-interest or the immediate interest of the herd. But then progress becomes a matter of education rather than of heredity.

In spite of this reservation, we should not hesitate to admit that, on the whole, history can be made to show a change for the better in human nature when a sufficiently long-range view is taken. This has been, as indicated already, partly brought about by the mechanical growth of culture and of subjective adaptation to it. But it has also been, one may suggest, due to the influence of men born from time to time who had more sympathy with suffering humanity than was stamped upon them by the circumstances in the midst of which they were born and reared. Thus Marx or Kropotkin held a larger view of human unity than was justified by their surroundings. It was the same with Buddha or Christ, as it has been with Gandhi in our own times. This love, or sense of human unity, may have been in them from the beginning; or, it may have had small normal beginnings from which it became developed to extraordinary proportions by later application. It is the leadership of such men which seems to me to have been more responsible for the progress of civilization than any other single factor which one can think of.

A Marxian will legitimately object and say, 'Yes, you are only partially right. But the mental make-up of these men has nothing supernatural about it; all can be explained in terms of personal history. Moreover, such men can occupy positions of leadership only if the objective conditions are favourable. It is the latter which plant the seeds of victory in the human breast; among leaders, the tendency only finds heightened expression. So the importance which you assign to leadership is overdone. It is the material conditions, evolving by dialectic steps towards the final emancipation of labouring humanity, which are at the root of progress.'

While admitting the soundness of this criticism to a partial extent, one cannot unfortunately subscribe to the Marxian faith that freedom is the goal towards which History is inevitably leading mankind, or that progress is itself an undeniable causal law. If that were so, more of it should

have been in evidence than happens to be the case. Large masses of men often permit themselves to be led by narrow sectional interests. Moreover, where is there a justification for the faith that all 'counter-revolutionary' forces are destined to lose in the long run, and the unity and freedom of the toilers of to-day are inevitably to be vindicated by their final victory? If there is any, it lies in our determination to see that it shall not be otherwise.

A man of faith in God may argue that the very presence of such determination in people's minds, and of adequate leadership which finds an expression for these potentially victorious tendencies, or the fact that there has been an unbroken succession of thinkers and of prophets who have led mankind from higher to higher aims, is itself proof of the operation of a Higher Law which rules the destiny of mankind. In many of Gandhi's writings, such a faith is clearly implied. But personally, let me confess, I have not yet come across any dependable evidence which justifies such a belief. For me, the existence of a Higher Purpose has neither been proved nor disproved. And as long as I remain at that level, I shall prefer to continue to believe that the observed progress in human history (though it is not deep in quality), has been brought about by the operation of intelligent sympathy. Men inspired by a sense of human brotherhood, pained by the sufferings of their fellowmen brought about through maladjustment between technical progress and the restricted sympathies of social groups, have occasionally given a new lead to mankind, and taught them to shed their narrownesses. That is how, I would say, the little improvement actually met with has come into being. But if someone were to raise the question, Why does this happen when it actually does, I would not be able to answer. If, moreover, the question were again raised whether the mental progress had not been the outcome of technological progress which demands larger and larger social integrations, I would prefer to say that I have not been able to arrive at any conclusive opinion on that point. I have seen enough of antiquated mental tendencies blocking the path of progress to be so optimistic as to believe that such obstructions will inevitably vanish on account of some historical necessity.

## Subject and Object

In the above discussion there is an implication that the Marxian subscribes to a form of superorganic theory of culture. He believes that human civilization proceeds along its own line of evolution, and the process is destined to lead to a complete emancipation of labouring humanity all over the world ; this movement being comparable in its inevitability to the river's progress towards the sea.

The comparison may be continued a little further. We know that a river is confined within its own banks ; and the form of the banks is determined, to a considerable extent, by the force and direction of the stream. In the same way, the stream of culture creates the mentality of the subjects in whose midst it operates. Each phase of civilization is attended by a conditioned form of desires in the subjects' minds, and this expresses itself in the shape of thoughts and of values, all of which are consistent with, and a result of, the movement of culture at the particular moment. The object and the subject do not however play an exclusively active and passive role, but they also act and react upon one another. It cannot, however, be denied that the Marxian places more emphasis upon the object rather than the subject. Thus, if some of the subjects are ready for progress and the object is not, there can be no forward movement. But if the objective conditions are ripe and even if only a handful of the subjects are ready, the rest not being so, then a step forward can and ought to be taken in anticipation of coming events. The likelihood is that the remaining subjects, however large their number may be, will fall in line in due course.

What is then the role of the revolutionary according to the Marxian ? He believes that the true revolutionary has the gift of perceiving beforehand which way the Juggernaut's car of civilization is proceeding. All that he is called upon to do is to remove the impediments in the way of the car's movement. Once he and a few more like him feel that the objective conditions have become ripe for an advance, the subjective role of the remaining masses of mankind becomes one of compara-

tively little moment. Their feelings may create a slight jar while the car is in motion ; they may cause some amount of resistance which could perhaps be avoided with greater care. But that is not the business of the revolutionary. His task is to speed up the change in objective conditions as fast as possible. Men will soon learn to adjust themselves to the new order. If they resist, they will suffer or perish. If they fall in line, their life would be smooth and happy ; and the revolution will bear fruit more quickly than otherwise.

This theoretical attitude of the Marxian leads him to a very interesting position in actual life. His aim, as we have said, is to bring about a transformation in objective conditions as fast as possible. In this, he finds justification for the use of violence. Not that he has any special liking for violence as such ; he tries to avoid it as much as any other lover of peace ; he wants to free the world from the bane of war as much as any pacifist. But with him, as the way of armed conflict is the quickest way, it is also the most desirable.

Personally, I have found it hard to accept such a fatalistic view of history, even if such history holds the promise of a quick liberation of mankind. Nor am I prepared to subscribe to the practical deductions which a Marxian draws from his view regarding the role of the individual in relation to culture. There is no doubt that most men generally play a passive role. But they can behave in a different way also. There have been moments in history when the active element has asserted itself in individuals, as well as in large masses of mankind, and given culture, including the course of economic events, an unexpected turn. That such occasions have been rare is due to the fact that men like to avoid the sufferings consequent upon every change, and thus conserve their nervous energy. And it is this inner acquiescence, born out of conservatism, which gives culture its apparent power to rule over the lives of men.

Taking up once more the simile of the river and its banks, one may say with the Marxian that although one may admit that the current of the river is largely responsible for the nature of the banks, yet, one cannot overlook the fact that

it is the land, of which the bank only forms a part, which determines to a considerable extent the nature of the current itself. Land-forms are continually evolving ; but, unlike the river which must find its way to the sea, there is no particular goal towards which land-forms are destined to proceed in course of time. In a similar manner, in social evolution, the direction is discontinuous and unpredictable, and set largely by the momentary choice of the subjects, whether they function in an active or passive manner.

This being so, unlike the Marxian, I would prefer to place more importance upon the subjective element in revolution than he is prepared to admit. Whatever the circumstances may be, a satyagrahi should not suffer from a sense of defeat, but ought to be able to find some way out of the woods towards his cherished goal. In other words, while working within the potentialities offered by the objective framework, he should himself be able to contribute the decisive element in the whole situation. The Marxian will, I am sure, make a similar claim for himself, or on behalf of the party to which he belongs. But then the subject becomes of more importance in his scheme of revolution than he is generally prepared to admit in theory.

### The Means Contrasted

The above is also the reason why the means employed by the Marxian and the satyagrahi for bringing about social change are so unlike one another. The Marxian plan is to capture the citadel of social power in the form of the State from the present ruling classes. It is to be placed under the dictatorship of the proletariat when all things will be remodelled so that exploitation is rendered impossible. Old institutions will disappear ; old habits and values will be set aside and their place taken by new ones in conformity with the new aim of social institutions. The Marxian hopes that the majority of mankind who prefer a passive mental attitude, will fall in line with the new order. But if they do not, he will probably not hesitate to bring about the desired transformation by means of heavy punishment. Unfortunately, the chain of violence thus grows longer as new difficulties crop up in the



way, quite a few of them being, in fact, the product of violence employed in the previous step.

Gandhi, on the other hand, relied more upon a basic change in the present mental organization of mankind. This was to be brought about not by the association of individuals who had perfected themselves by solitary personal endeavour, but by the corporate activity of people who tried to be more and more perfect as they worked out his twin programme of Constructive Work and Non-violent Non-co-operation. This is where one of the points of his originality lay.

The idea behind the Constructive Programme is to create the model of a new mode of production even in the face of the opposition of those who try to preserve the *status quo* by means of political power. Its aim is to convert all men into toilers, and distribute the wealth of mankind equitably, if not equally. Gandhi thought that personal inequalities of wealth would not matter if there were no law of inheritance, for in the latter lay the seeds of the growth of a privileged class. The idea behind Non-violent Non-co-operation is not to oust the present rulers anyhow from power, but to convert them by determined, yet civilized refusal to subscribe to proved wrongs. The aim of the conversion is to secure their co-operation in helping their erstwhile victims in building up a new social and economic order based on justice, equality and freedom.

In satyagraha, the personality of the exploiter is given due respect ; its successful termination leaves no stigma of defeat, nor any pride of conquest. It thus blesses him who uses it, and also him against whom it is used. And, on the whole, the satyagrahi hopes to build up a more satisfactory social order through the endeavour of people who may or may not have adequate armed strength at their disposal.<sup>2</sup>

Gandhi's plan of bringing about social change not through punishment but by conversion has a deep appeal for me ; and I believe it would be worth while to give it a fair trial on a large scale in a world now living under the dark shadow of war. Indeed Gandhi recognized that the supreme task facing mankind was to find an effective substitute for war.<sup>3</sup>

The Marxian way, in contrast, seems to me to be based upon an undue depreciation of the individual's role in history. It depends on a serious lack of faith in man's capacity to change except under the compulsion of fear. An unseemly reliance is placed on the mechanical process of drilling in necessary habits of action or thought by means of repeated and skilful propaganda. The best in human nature can hardly spring forth from such a barren soil, unwatered as it is by the joy of inner conviction.

Other and more gentle methods than the Marxian have also been suggested from time to time and given a trial in history. These may be collectively classed as methods of constitutional change. Many of them have, however, evaded a fundamental question, namely, the question of power. How is the power to shape social destiny going to be transferred from the privileged classes to the toiling millions? Here, Gandhi's means of direct action suggests a way which seems to me to be better than programmes based on constitutional methods whose chief aim is often the avoidance of conflicts.<sup>4</sup>

### Non-violence and Democracy

There is, moreover, another reason why the revolutionary method of satyagraha appears to be more desirable than either the Marxian or even the constitutional way.

Each one of us has his own view of history, and of the role played by various forces in it. It is reasonable to suppose that these views may differ from person to person, for logically several of them may be equally admissible; only, if the premises are taken for granted. But if each one of us believes that he has reached nearest to truth, and is therefore morally entitled to convert others to his point of view either through punishment or through the use of political power as applied in education, then there would be no end of trouble in a mad world. The proof of whether one is right will then lie in one's power to inflict punishment, or in the ability to force men's minds into particular channels by the denial of freedom of thought. That would indeed be a poor way of proving the rightness of one's opinions.

It is true, one can or should live in terms of one's own opinions. And the most decent way of convincing others of the rightness of one's position is by an attempt to live according to one's own light. This may entail the duty of opposing what appears to be wrong in one's neighbour or the institution for which he stands. If the opposition is in terms of non-violence, and the aim conversion, then no harm is done. The determination to bear the consequences of one's truth with no hatred against the personality of those who differ and even inflict suffering, is the surest guarantee of the sincerity of one's own convictions.

This method has the additional merit of helping us in correcting ourselves if we happen to be in the wrong. If suffering is restricted to one's own side, one does not rush to propagate half-tested truths. Such suffering, when cheerfully borne, burns up the sources of personal error which may warp opinions. At the same time, there is the additional satisfaction that no one else has been injured for an opinion held by oneself. This helps in preserving a comradely feeling towards other individuals, as well as a respect for partial views of truth other than one's own.

The non-violent way is thus the way of democracy. Self-suffering also brings the power of spreading one's own opinions by actually living it, within the reach of even the physically weakest individual or community (cf. *Selections*, 55-60).

### **The Gospel of Work**

One thing which appeals to me very much in Gandhi's writings is his idea that in a free society, every man should be given the fullest liberty to develop and exercise his special aptitudes and abilities consistently with equal opportunity granted to others. At the same time, all men, whatever the nature of their special abilities may be, will be subject to the law of bread-labour. That is to say, every able-bodied person should perform at least that amount of manual labour which will produce the equivalent of what he consumes for physical sustenance. This labour should be in the production of basic necessities of life like food, clothing or shelter.

When I first read Tolstoy, the fact that I was spending my days in intellectual labour of a kind which could be described as something useful to society only after considerable ingenuity, made me feel restless ; and I rushed to devote myself to productive service in order to compensate for the life I was living. The work of organizing a spinning and weaving centre without any aid from outside, relieved me immensely in a spiritual sense. But when the work became well established, it failed to yield the same satisfaction as had originally been derived from it. Gradually I discovered the reason was that the institution, instead of being self-acting, depended too much upon me. I seemed to gain in personal influence ; but this was a wretched compensation for organization in terms of self-rule. So I proceeded to remodel the institution in order that the entire management could be entrusted to local leadership. But before the new plan could be properly executed, the work was interrupted by circumstances beyond our control. I was, by chance, thrown into the company of numerous workers in the political field. And then I discovered for myself a new opportunity and a new task no less significant than the organization of cloth manufacture or cottage industries. This was the duty of distributing the fruits of socially useful intellectual labour among social and political works. The cause of pure scientific investigation became, at the same time, clothed with a new significance ; while its character was altered in conformity with the demands of a newly developed sense of social responsibility.

But the question had still to be answered : Was I entitled to my daily bread ? I imagined I was ; and in order to prove to myself that I had no time left beyond what was necessary for rest, I began to work harder and harder. But soon I discovered that there were still plenty of blank patches of time which could be turned to use, and when I could spin and produce the cloth which I needed. Thus, although I might not find time to perform the full measure of bread-labour, yet it was possible to perform a substantial portion of it in spite of other occupations.

After lifelong experience, Tolstoy discovered the great truth that the day consisted of twenty-four hours. If one

spent eight hours in intellectual labour and eight more in personal requirements, there still remained eight full hours for manual labour. Then I read Gandhi, once more, with care in order to find a solution of my difficulties. And I learnt that he would allow me to pursue my special inclination for science provided I was prepared to satisfy not more than my natural wants and spend the rest of my earnings for society which was its rightful owner. All our time as well as our talents are, according to Gandhi, society's own property ; we are no more than servants entrusted with its proper utilization. The fruits of our labours ought to be at the disposal of the community within which we live ; and we can take from the community no more than what the latter can afford to give to us. Thus, self-acquired property under the world's existing arrangements is no more our own than what has been handed down under the existing laws of inheritance. We are trustees, on behalf of the community, of all we hold.

With regard to wages, Gandhi had said many years ago to lawyers, accountants and engineers that they were all worthy of their hire : but the hire consisted of no more than their daily bread, which, of course, included all their natural wants (*Selections*, 158, 278).

There is another aspect of the law of bread-labour which has given me an abiding interest in it. A common idea which underlies industrial civilization is that, for the sake of human growth, we have to increase the hours of leisure which a man can devote to work which suits his own taste or inclination. This is good so far as it goes. But there is a feeling behind both capitalistic and socialistic civilization that the work which we have unavoidably to perform for the sustenance of human life, should be reduced by mechanical appliances to the farthest possible extent. No one can quarrel with an attempt to reduce avoidable drudgery ; but the attitude to work and leisure seems to have something wrong about it. The work which is essential for the life of man can be looked upon as sacred, and made capable of developing the personality of the worker. He will undoubtedly need some leisure for devotion to work of free choice ; but the consciousness that the moral

bond of bread-labour unites him to the rest of mankind should uplift him and transform the labour which Nature imposes upon us with a heavy hand, into a creative endeavour capable of unfolding the deepest petals of our being. In this will lie the victory of man over nature.

### Self-rule

But does Gandhi's bread-labour mean that every man should lead an atomistic life, that we should dissipate all that mankind has so far gained by division of labour and its corporate organization? Gandhi's answer is clearly in the negative. There must be organization and interdependence, and if necessary they should reach world-wide proportions. But Gandhi's insistence is that this interdependence should not be based on coercion. It should be of a voluntary character, and all co-operating units should be in enjoyment of freedom and authority without discrimination.

Gandhi wished therefore to rescue the individual from his thralldom to the present world's economic and political system of centralized and coercive authority. His task was to devise means so that voluntary institutions could be restored to an adequate control over men's daily lives before they became ready for voluntary interdependence.

This is the underlying purpose of his theory of decentralization. Without it, the individual who becomes well fed and well cared for in a centralized, authoritarian state, still remains spiritually anæmic. And the greatest loss of which Gandhi was afraid in any social institution was the loss of inner worth which was not to be bartered away for material gain.

In order to bring about decentralization, there is to be a considerable development of democratic institutions in all branches of social life. Old institutions may have to be recast, new ones set up; and even the latter may have to be remade again and again as people gain in freedom and experience.

Once people realize the value of such institutions, they will naturally try to preserve them by means of their own strength. And all can share in the defence of democratic

institutions equally if the means of self-preservation are also democratized. As has been indicated already, this is only possible under non-violence. Violence inevitably brings about concentration of power in a few hands. And by that very process the latter become external to the masses, and no longer fully representative of them (cf. *Selections*, ch. XI).

### Nationalism and Internationalism

A criticism was often heard in Gandhi's lifetime that whatever his personal philosophy may have been, his endeavours would, in actual result, lead to the prosperity of the Indian *bourgeoisie* at the expense of the working classes. In other words, Gandhi's non-violence, either intentionally or unintentionally, would only help the upper classes of India in entrenching themselves in power, or in preventing the working classes from rising against them in revolt. Some demanded that he should therefore give up his association with the Indian National Congress, and have no truck with the upper or the middle classes if they subserved the interests of the former.

It is quite true that Gandhi enlisted the support of both the peasantry as well as of the present privileged classes in the cause of India's freedom; as it is also true that some among the upper classes profited personally by their association with him. The Indian National Congress could not also always keep step with his idealism.

Yet, two things have to be remembered very clearly. During Gandhi's leadership of the Congress, he consistently tried to lift the interests of the organization from its concern with 'nationalism' to the interest of the 'masses'. He allowed the Congress to advocate no cause which was exclusively that of the privileged and thus hostile to the interest of the masses. At the same time, he tried to lead India away from her concept of narrow nationalism into a recognition of her duty as a member of the international world, where her duty centred, firstly, in sharing her resources in common with the rest of mankind, and, secondly, in building up a non-violent economy at home which would be the basis of her scheme of non-violent defence (*Selections*, 174-75, 345-52).

But these were tasks which have remained unfulfilled, firstly because many of his ideas and thoughts remained unattended to by those who served the cause of national freedom under his leadership. Secondly, such idealism demanded a degree of self-confidence and strength which might have developed in India if there had been more of non-violent organization before India attained independence. Indeed, the latter event took place even before we deserved it on the basis of organized non-violent strength.

That strength has yet to be gained. And perhaps the best means are yet those devised by Gandhi whom we still love to call the Father of the Nation.

### *Summary*

The supreme lesson which Gandhi drew from history is that there is a benevolent law operating behind universal processes. Under its operation, mankind has progressed in course of time towards a deeper realization of the essential unity of life. Barriers between communities are being progressively reduced.

The purpose of human life is the realization of that law ; and the duty of every individual is to order his life in accordance with it. He has thus to help in the historical task of promoting human freedom and unity.

If then we wish to break down narrownesses which cramp human life, our method of change should also be informed by a high sense of human brotherhood and of the dignity of man. While non-co-operating with institutions, we should bear no ill will against adversaries, but patiently try to convert them through opposition informed by love. The aim should be to convert the erstwhile adversary into a willing partner in the making of a new order based upon a more comprehensive sense of human unity.

The law of manual labour is the first moral law of life ; all men have to share in common toil for the maintenance of human life upon earth. Such toil serves to deepen the sense of fellowship among men. A civilization based on freedom



and equality is possible only if men recognize the law of bread labour, and also place their talents, whether material or moral, whether self-acquired or inherited in terms of existing laws, at the disposal of the community for common human welfare. "

When production is decentralized, it does not mean that communities should lead an atomistic life. There should be voluntary co-operation in whichever field it is needed ; and this should be in disregard of modern barriers set up by nations.

Such a condition is practicable only when a community becomes self-contained in the production of its vital needs, and if it also depends on its own strength for purposes of self-defence. The production of the elementary necessities of life have to be decentralized and the means of their production have to be placed under communal ownership. The power of self-defence can also be democratized, and even the smallest community may gain that power by replacing methods of violence by those of non-violence.

Under violence there is no real safety. It leads to a race for armaments, on the maintenance of a precarious balance of power, and on a helpless dependence of small communities on more powerfully armed groups. Under non-violence, it is the will to put up with suffering in a just cause which counts most. That strength is not dependent on physical equipment, and is available to the weakest human being and to the smallest social group.

Freedom thus gained will help every community to co-operate on terms of equality with others, and thus lay the foundation of a truly democratic world federation based upon freedom.

## NOTES

1. I subscribe to the belief or the philosophy that all life in its essence is one, and that the humans are working consciously or unconsciously towards the realization of that identity (GC, 88 ; cf. *Selections*, 78-80).

Human society is a ceaseless growth, an unfoldment in terms of spirituality (*Selections*, 79).

2. But can depraved human nature be set right by the method of love ? In poetic language Gandhi once wrote :

When I was a little child, there used to be two blind performers in Rajkot. One of them was a musician. When he played on his instrument, his fingers swept the strings with an unerring instinct and everybody listened spell-bound to his playing. Similarly there are chords in every human heart. If we only know how to strike the right chord, we bring out the music (*H*, 27 5-1939, 136).

In trying to explain why he preferred the method of non-violence to violence, he wrote :

It is because the rulers, if they are bad, are so, not necessarily or wholly by reason of birth, but largely because of their environment, that I have hopes of altering their course. It is perfectly true that the rulers cannot alter their course themselves. If they are dominated by their environment, they do not surely deserve to be killed, but should be changed by a change of environment. But the environment are we—the people who make the rulers what they are. They are thus an exaggerated edition of what we are in the aggregate. If my argument is sound, any violence done to the rulers would be violence done to ourselves. It would be suicide. And since I do not want to commit suicide, nor encourage my neighbours to do so, I become non-violent myself and invite my neighbours to do likewise.

Moreover, violence may destroy one or more bad rulers, but like Ravana's head, others will pop up their places, for, the root lies elsewhere. It lies in us. If we reform ourselves, the rulers will automatically do so (*Selections*, 364. Also cf. 141-2, 240, 480-1).

3. We have to make truth and non-violence not matters of mere individual practice but for practice by groups and communities and nations (*Selections*, vii).

It has not yet been acknowledged to be of any value in the solution of world problems *or rather the one supreme problem of war* \* It may be that what is claimed to be new in it will prove to be really of no value in terms of that supreme problem (*Selections*, v).

4. Up to the year 1906, I simply relied on appeal to reason. I was a very industrious reformer. I was a good draftsman, as I always had a close grip of facts which in its turn was the necessary result of my meticulous regard for truth. But I found that reason failed to produce an impression when the critical moment arrived. Since then the conviction has been growing upon me, that things of fundamental importance to the people are not secured by reason alone but have to be purchased with their suffering. Nobody has probably drawn up more petitions or espoused more forlorn causes than I and I have come to this fundamental conclusion that *if you want something really important to be done you must not merely satisfy the reason, you must move the heart also*. \* The appeal of reason is more to the head but the penetration of the heart comes from suffering. It opens up the inner understanding in man (*Selections*, 439).

## **CHAPTER TWO**

# **ECONOMICS OF NON-VIOLENCE**

### **Non-violence and Its Implications**

It was at the All-India Congress Committee's meeting at Delhi in September 1938 that Gandhi pressed upon the Indian National Congress to make up its mind about non-violence firmly and finally. As he saw the situation, the prospects of a war were becoming more and more serious and there was no assurance that this was going to be the last war through which humanity would have to wade on its way to peace. Gandhi felt that his task was to perfect some technique by means of which conflicts could be resolved and values defended even against the heaviest of odds ; and it was also his fond hope that India would be able to lead the way in this adventure as she had inherited some kind of non-violent tradition from her hoary past. He therefore tried to persuade the Indian National Congress to take courage in both hands and eschew reliance upon arms for the defence of her values. But, at least, for the time being, this was not destined to succeed.

The appeal of non-violence is essentially moral, and the problem which naturally arises is this : Can any and every social order be defended by the Gandhian method of non-violence ? This question was pointedly placed before him in February 1947 when the reply was received that unless something had been gained by non-violence, it could not be defended by means of that technique. The implication or the corollary is that anything whose acquisition depends on violence, can be defended by violent means alone,

He was then asked for his opinion about capitalism. The reply was that private persons could accumulate capital only by taking recourse to violence, whether open or tacit ; the implication thus being that a capitalistic structure could not be defended by means of the non-violent method. Yet, Gandhi proceeded to explain that, as capital is necessary, it would be the duty of the State 'in a non-violent society' to gather it for social use. Such accumulation 'was not only possible, it was desirable and inevitable' ( *Selections*, 162).

This leads us to another important question. Supposing, a nation decides to eschew violence and defend its possessions by non-violence, then what should it do if the economic order which it has inherited from the past is already marked by inequality and class differences ? Gandhi's advice was that, as a first step in the preparation for non-violent defence, the nation or community should voluntarily abandon all 'ill-gotten gains' (ibid.).

This is one of the fundamental principles in Gandhi's political philosophy, and due attention has therefore to be given to it. A community has to set its internal affairs in order on a moral plane before it can hope to succeed in its moral appeal to an aggressor or opponent through warlike non-violence. We have also to examine, however briefly, how such an ideal can have a widespread popular appeal.

A nation which prepares for armed conflict has to undertake many things before it can effectively take part in war. The aim for which war is waged should be able to evoke the willing co-operation and deep loyalty of its citizens even under severe strain. The latter can only put up with privation and more if the cause is considered to be sufficiently worthy. Secondly, the economic organization has to be geared up to meet the demands of war ; and this in modern times is itself a sufficiently exacting order. Thirdly, the administrative machinery at home must be of a kind which can keep all the wheels running more or less smoothly throughout the pendency of war.

We are leaving out of consideration for the time being the strategic and tactical aspects of the methods of non-violence.

These will be discussed in a separate chapter. Our present concern is with the nature of the non-violent ideal, its psychological appeal, and how a community may set about putting its own house in order in the economic field.

In the case of non-violence in India, it may be said without hesitation that Gandhi tried to place a highly moral and worthy ideal before the Indian nation, and through it before other nations as well. It was marked by austerity, or as Gandhi described it in terms of an ancient phrase, its characteristics were 'plain living and high thinking'. Such an ideal may not have been *attractive* for most men and women. But when one considers the degradation and impoverishment which had overtaken India after centuries of economic and political subordination, it became comparatively easy for him to popularize a Spartan ideal of life, for many were prepared to pay this price for the attainment of political freedom.

Gandhi was one of the great teachers of mankind. His intense realization of the existence of suffering led him to a kind of inner identification with those whose lot was to toil in sorrow and inward darkness. Through constant preaching, as well as by an infectious personal example, he was able to inspire many men and women in what was, in a way, a new religious struggle. They too prepared themselves to undergo privation and suffering in pursuance of the non-violent ideal so that the 'lowly' could be emancipated and inherit the earth. For, according to Gandhi, the earth belonged only to those who toiled with the sweat of their brow. Gokhale, one of India's great national leaders, once remarked that Gandhi had the singular capacity of turning heroes out of clay.

This is therefore one aspect of the question of the organization of non-violence. The ideal was propagated in the best manner possible. The second aspect is the creation of an economy which is based upon an absence of exploitation, that is on non-violence. That task is undoubtedly more difficult, as those who live a privileged life are never likely to take the challenge of the religion of human equality without resistance. Yet Gandhi persevered in this also, and in course of nearly forty years of labour from 1920 to 1948, he succeeded in building up numerous India-wide organizations of a voluntary

nature. Their aim was to rebuild the economy as well as the educational system of rural India so that both might be based upon the new values which were held forth before the country.

We shall now proceed to describe some of the salient features of the economy of non-violence in the present chapter.

### Theory of Decentralism

Gandhi's attitude towards industrialization had partly been derived from Ruskin and Tolstoy and partly from his readings of the economic history of India under British rule. It is not impossible that some of his ideas about Anarchism were obtained from Kropotkin, although there is no reference to this author in any of his writings. Yet, while Gandhi was in England as a student, and also a member of a vegetarian club, Kropotkin lived in London and exercised a certain amount of influence over idealistic intellectuals through his numerous writings.

Gandhi's assessment of the worth of an economic system was clearly based upon its effect upon the development of the individual. It was always from the humanistic standpoint that he examined any contrivance, whether it was technological or social. The legitimate purpose of machines or of industrial organization was to lighten the load of human labour and help in the establishment of human equality. If anything militated against these, it stood automatically condemned in a moral sense.

As early as 1909, Gandhi published a book entitled *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, in which he stated that machinery and industrialism had degraded human society and was therefore 'a great sin'.<sup>1</sup> The charge was repeated in 1926<sup>2</sup> and again in Europe in 1931.<sup>3</sup>

One might argue that the fault lies not in the machine or industrial organization, but in the fact that the means of production are under private ownership and the motive is also private gain. Gandhi was not so sure about this, and stated emphatically that, so far as India was concerned, it would not

be possible to provide sufficient, healthful employment to all able-bodied men and women through large-scale industries. England had nearly succeeded in doing so ; but this was based upon the ruination of millions of homes in other countries. India should therefore refuse to tread such a sinful path.

The counter-argument might be raised that instead of selling her goods overseas, India might increase the level of her internal consumption and thus raise her standard of living which was desperately low. Gandhi's reply was that this was exactly what he had been trying to do. Instead of producing quickly and in great bulk by centralized technology, and then taking a roundabout way of expensive distribution, his idea was to organize both production and consumption as close to one another as possible. This is the essence of his theory of decentralized economy through which men and women can attain a measure of economic freedom never guaranteed to them under opposite conditions.<sup>4</sup>

Gandhi also advocated communal ownership of the 'means of production of the elementary necessities of life'.<sup>5</sup> The aim of production had also to be revolutionized. In this, he sometimes came near some forms of socialism. Yet the difference between him and some of those who advocate socialism in India to-day is very clear. In 1940, he had occasion to write :

'Pandit Nehru wants industrialisation because he thinks, if it is socialised, it would be free from the evils of Capitalism. My own view is that the evils are inherent in industrialism, and no amount of socialism can eradicate them' (H, 29-9-1940, 299).

### **On Machinery**

Many have wondered at Gandhi's insistence upon the spinning wheel. His chief argument in its favour was that it brought useful work to the farmer in his own home during hours or months in which there was little else to do. Its organization was also calculated to bring about voluntary co-operation in rural India as no other programme was ever likely to achieve.<sup>6</sup>



If work could be given to all, and the villager could produce or mend tools designed for increasing output or for lightening his labour, Gandhi was quite prepared to welcome such inventions. So he said :

‘If India takes to Khaddar and all it means, I do not lose the hope of India taking only as much of modern machinery as may be considered necessary for the amenities of life and for labour-saving purposes’ (VI, 24-7-1924, 246).<sup>7</sup>

### **Towards Collective Ownership**

Just as Gandhi’s ideas about machinery became modified between 1909 and 1931 and later, it is interesting that from about 1942, he began also to advocate the idea of collective ownership. In an article entitled ‘Individual or Collective ?’ written in February 1942, he placed his opinions forcibly on this subject and argued that

‘We shall not derive the full benefits of agriculture until we take to co-operative farming. What applies to land applies equally to cattle. It is quite another matter that it may be difficult to convert people to adopt this way of life straightaway. The straight and narrow road is always hard to traverse.’<sup>8</sup>

### **A Criticism Answered**

One of the objections raised against the Gandhian programme is, Why should we have to go back to an age of agriculture and handicrafts when the world has advanced technologically to its present stature ?

The answer is two-fold. Firstly, Gandhi’s idea was that if a community did not have the resources of industrial advancement, that should not tempt them to barter freedom for comfort.

‘I have no quarrel with steamships and telegraphs. They may stay, if they can, without the support of industrialism and all it connotes. They are not an end. We must not suffer exploitation for the sake of steamships and telegraphs’ (VI, 7-10-1926, 348).

If resources were lacking and even the cheap spinning wheel could not be purchased, Gandhi advised men and women to spin with the spinning whorl and prepare their own cloth. If, however, machinery can be utilized without loss of freedom, Gandhi was quite prepared to welcome it. It is freedom which is the highest value ; and this has to be preserved even at the cost of technological inefficiency, if that becomes unavoidable.

The second question has to be answered, namely, Is it not going back to the past ? One may be permitted to state that the resemblance between what Gandhi tried to create in India with the help of the spinning wheel and what existed in ancient India is one in appearance only. Gandhi knew well enough that the past had been tarnished by social inequality, of which untouchability was only one persistent symptom. But if he pleaded for manual industries, or on behalf of 'village republics', a new meaning and content were attached in each case to the old forms.

Masses of men had been degraded into the position of machine tenders, and it was his aim to rescue them from this new form of slavery. Once the individual regained his freedom through decentralization of production, there was no objection to the development of voluntary co-operation even across national boundaries. Thus, as Gandhi's ideals were different, his village-centred society was likely to be very different from what existed in India in the past.<sup>9</sup>

As he recognized the role which decentralized economy had to play in relation to his proposed substitute for war, he wrote in 1940 when the world was in the throes of the second world war :

'Society based on non-violence can only consist of groups settled in villages in which voluntary co-operation is the condition of dignified and peaceful existence. A society which anticipates and provides for meeting violence with violence will either lead a precarious life or create big cities and magazines for defence purposes. It is not unreasonable to presume from the state of Europe that its cities, its monster factories and huge armaments are so intimately interrelated that the one cannot exist without the other. The nearest

approach to civilisation based upon non-violence is the erst-while village republic of India. I admit that it was very crude. I know that there was in it no non-violence of my definition and conception. But the germ was there' (*H*, 13-1-1940, 410).

'My idea of village Swaraj is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its vital wants, and yet interdependent for many things in which dependence is a necessity. Thus every village's first concern will be to grow its own food crops and cotton for its cloth. It should have a reserve for its cattle, recreation and playground for adults and children. Then, if there is more land available, it will grow *useful* money crops, thus excluding ganja, tobacco, opium and the like. The village will maintain a village theatre, school and public hall. It will have its own waterworks ensuring clean water supply. This can be done through controlled wells and tanks. Education will be compulsory up to the final basic course. As far as possible every activity will be conducted on a co-operative basis. There will be no castes such as we have today with their graded untouchability. Non-violence with its technique of Satyagraha and non-co-operation will be the sanction of the village community. There will be a compulsory service of village guards who will be selected by rotation from a register maintained by the village. The government of the village will be conducted by the Panchayat of five persons annually elected by the adult villagers, male and female, possessing minimum prescribed qualifications. These will have all the authority and jurisdiction required. Since there will be no system of punishments in the accepted sense this Panchayat will be the legislature, judiciary and executive combined to operate for its year of office. Any village can become such a republic today without much interference, even from the present Government whose sole effective connection with the villages is the exaction of village revenue. I have not examined here the question of relations with the neighbouring villages and the centre, if any. My purpose is to present an outline of village government. Here there is perfect democracy based upon individual freedom. The individual is the architect of his own government. The law of non-violence rules him and his government. He

and his village are able to defy the might of a world. For the law governing every villager is that he will suffer death in the defence of his and his village's honour' (*H*, 26-7-1942, 238).

A decentralized economic system and Satyagraha are therefore to be looked upon as two integral parts of one revolutionary ideal through which Gandhi hoped that mankind would be ushered into a new order of creative freedom.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>The workers in the mills of Bombay have become slaves. The condition of the women working in the mills is shocking. When there were no mills, these women were not starving. If the machinery craze grows in our country it will become an unhappy land. It may be considered a heresy, but I am bound to say that it were better for us to send money to Manchester and use flimsy Manchester cloth, than to multiply mills in India. By using Manchester cloth, we would only waste our money, but by reproducing Manchester in India, we shall keep our money at the price of our blood, because our moral being will be sapped, and I call in support of my statement the very mill-hands as witnesses. And those who have amassed wealth out of factories are not likely to be better than other rich men... I fear we will have to admit that moneyed men support British rule; their interest is bound up with its stability..... Impoverished India can be free, but it will be hard for an India made rich through immorality to regain its freedom (*IHR*, 56).

<sup>2</sup>Indeed the West has had a surfeit of industrialism and exploitation. The fact is that this industrial civilization is a disease because it is all evil. Let us not be deceived by catchwords and phrases. I have no quarrel with steamships and telegraphs. They may stay, if they can, without the support of industrialism and all it connotes. They are not an end. We must not suffer exploitation for the sake of steamships and telegraphs. They are in no way indispensable

for the permanent welfare of the human race. Now that we know the use of steam and electricity, we should be able to use them on due occasion and after we have learnt to avoid industrialism. Our concern is therefore to destroy industrialism at any cost. The present distress is insufferable. Pauperism must go. But industrialism is no remedy. The evil does not lie in the use of bullock carts. It lies in our selfishness and want of consideration for our neighbours. If we have no love for our neighbours, no change however revolutionary can do us any good (YI, 7-10-1926, 348).

<sup>3</sup>Industrialism is, I am afraid, going to be a curse for mankind. Industrialism depends entirely on your capacity to exploit, on foreign markets being open to you, and on the absence of competitors. It is because these factors are getting less and less every day for England that its number of unemployed is mounting up daily. The Indian boycott was but a flea-bite. And if that is the state of England, a vast country like India cannot expect to benefit by industrialisation. In fact, India, when it begins to exploit other nations—as it must if it becomes industrialised—will be a curse for other nations, a menace to the world. And why should I think of industrialising India to exploit other nations? Don't you see the tragedy of the situation, viz., that we can find work for three hundred millions unemployed (through the spinning wheel and village industries—N. K. B.), but England can find none for its three millions and is faced with a problem that baffles the greatest intellects of England? The future of industrialism is dark. England has got successful competitors in America, Japan, France, Germany. It has competitors in the handful of mills in India, and as there has been an awakening in India, even so there will be an awakening in South Africa with its vastly richer resources—natural, mineral and human. The mighty English look quite pigmies before the mighty races of Africa. They are noble savages after all, you will say. They are certainly noble, but no savages and in course of a few years the Western nations may cease to find in Africa a dumping ground for their wares. And if the future of industrialism is dark for the West, would it not be darker still for India? (YI, 12-11-1931, 355).

<sup>4</sup>We want to organize our national power not by adopting the best methods of production only, but by the best method of *both* production and distribution (*Selections*, 250.)

The science of Khadi requires decentralization of production and consumption. Consumption should take place as nearly as possible where Khadi is produced (*Selections*, 256).

I am personally opposed to great trusts and concentration of industries by means of elaborate machinery. If India takes to Khaddar and all it means, I do not lose the hope of India taking only as much of the modern machinery as may be considered necessary for the amenities of life and for labour-saving purposes (*Selections*, 260).

Gandhiji would favour :

Mass-production, certainly, but not based on force. After all, the message of the spinning wheel is that. It is mass-production but mass-production in people's own homes. If you multiply individual production to millions of times, would it not give you mass-production on a tremendous scale ? I would categorically state my conviction that the mania for mass-production is responsible for the world crises. Granting for the moment that machinery may supply all the needs of humanity, still, it would concentrate production in particular areas, so that you would have to go in a roundabout way to regulate distribution, whereas if there is production and distribution both in the respective areas where things are required, it is automatically regulated and there is less chance for fraud, none for speculation. When production and consumption thus become localised, the temptation to speed up production indefinitely and at any price disappears. All the endless difficulties and problems that our present-day economic system presents, too, would then come to an end. There would be no unnatural accumulation of hoards in the pockets of the few, and want in the midst of plenty in regard to the rest. You see that these nations are able to exploit the so-called weaker or unorganised races of the world. Once these races gain this elementary knowledge, and decide that they are no more going to be exploited, they will simply be satisfied with what they can provide themselves. Mass-

production, then, at least where the vital necessities are concerned, will disappear.

Q. So you are opposed to machinery only because and when it concentrates production and distribution in the hands of the few ?

A. You are right. I hate privilege and monopoly. Whatever cannot be shared with the masses is taboo to me. That is all (*H*, 2-11-1934, 301).

<sup>5</sup> According to me the economic constitution of India and for the matter of that of the world, should be such that no one under it should suffer from want of food and clothing. In other words, everybody should be able to get sufficient work to enable him to make the two ends meet. And this ideal can be universally realized only if the means of production of the elementary necessities of life remain in the control of the masses. These should be freely available to all as God's air and water are or ought to be ; they should not be made a vehicle of traffic for the exploitation of others. Their monopolization by any country, nation or group of persons would be unjust. The neglect of this simple principle is the cause of the destitution that we witness today not only in this unhappy land but in other parts of the world too (*Selections*, 160).

Violence is no monopoly of any one party. I know Congressmen who are neither socialists nor communists, but who are frankly devotees of the cult of violence. Contrariwise, I know socialists and communists who will not hurt a fly but who believe in the universal ownership of the instruments of production. I rank myself as one among them (*Selections*, 161).

<sup>6</sup> Probably very few workers have noticed that progress of hand-spinning means the greatest voluntary co-operation the world has ever seen. It means co-operation among millions of human beings scattered over a very wide area and working for their daily bread. No doubt agriculture has required much co-operative effort, but hand-spinning requires still greater and more honest co-operation. Wheat grows more by nature's honesty than man's. Manufacture of yarn in our cottages is dependent solely on human honesty. Hand-spinning is

impossible without the willing and intelligent co-operation of millions of human beings. We have to arrive at a stage when the spinner like the grain-seller is assured of a steady market for his yarn as well as the supply of cotton sliver, if he or she does not know the process of carding. Is it any wonder if I claim that hand-spinning can drive away as if by magic the growing pauperism of the masses? An English friend sends me a newspaper cutting showing the progress of machinery in China. He has evidently imagined that in advocating hand-spinning, I am propagating my ideal about machinery. I am doing nothing of this kind. I would favour the use of the most elaborate machinery if thereby India's pauperism and resulting idleness be avoided. I have suggested hand-spinning as the only ready means of driving away penury and making famine of work and wealth impossible. The spinning wheel itself is a piece of valuable machinery, and in my own humble way I have tried to secure improvements in it in keeping with the special conditions of India. The only question that a lover of India and humanity has to address himself to is how best to devise practical means of alleviating India's wretchedness and misery. No scheme of irrigation or other agricultural improvement that human ingenuity can conceive can deal with the vastly scattered population of India or provide work for masses of mankind who are constantly thrown out of employment. Imagine a nation working only five hours per day on an average, and this, not by choice but by force of circumstances, and you have a realistic picture of India.

If the reader would visualise the picture, he must dismiss from his mind the busy fuss of the city life or the grinding fatigue of the factory life or the slavery of the plantations. These are but drops in the ocean of Indian humanity. If he would visualise the picture of the Indian skeleton, he must think of the eighty per cent of the population which is working its own fields and which has practically no occupation for at least four months in the year and which therefore lives on the borderland of starvation. This is the normal condition. The ever-recurring famines make a large addition to this enforced idleness. What is the work that these men and women can



easily do in their cottages so as to supplement their very slender resources ? Does anyone still doubt that it is only hand-spinning and nothing else ? And I repeat that this can be made universal in a few months' time if only the workers will. Indeed it is on a fair way to becoming universal. Experts only are needed to organise it. People are ready, and what is most in favour of hand-spinning is that it is not a new and untried method, but people have up to recently been using it. Its successful re-introduction does need skilful endeavour, honesty and co operation on the largest scale known to the world. And if India can achieve this co-operation, who shall deny that India has by that one act achieved Swaraj ? (VI, 3-11-1921, 350.)

It is my claim that as soon as we have completed the boycott of foreign cloth (through the production of hand-spun and hand-woven cloth—N. K. B.), we shall have evolved so far that we shall remodel national life in keeping with the ideal of simplicity and domesticity implanted in the bosom of the masses. We will not then be dragged into imperialism, which is built upon exploitation of the weaker races of the earth, and the acceptance of a giddy materialistic civilization protected by naval and air forces that have made peaceful living almost impossible. On the contrary, we shall then refine that imperialism into a commonwealth of nations which will combine, if they do, for the purpose of giving their best to the world and of protecting, not by brute force but by self-suffering, the weaker nations or races of the earth. Non-co-operation aims at nothing less than this revolution in the thought-world. Such a transformation can come only after the complete success of the spinning-wheel. India can become fit for delivering such a message when she has become proof against temptation and therefore attacks from outside, by becoming self-contained regarding two of her chief needs — food and clothing (VI, 29-6-1921, 206)

<sup>7</sup> The Non-co-operation Movement itself was described as

an attempt to introduce, if it is at all possible, a human or humane spirit among the men behind the machinery. Organi-

sation of machinery for the purpose of concentrating wealth and power in the hands of the few for the exploitation of many, I hold to be altogether wrong. Much of the organisation of the machinery of the present age is of that type. The movement of the spinning wheel is an organized attempt to displace machinery from that state of exclusiveness and exploitation and to place it in its proper state. Under my scheme, therefore, men in charge of machinery will think not of themselves or even of the nation to which they belong but of the whole human race. Thus Lancashire will cease to use machinery for exploiting India and other countries, but on the contrary will devise means for enabling India to convert in her own villages her cotton into cloth. Nor will Americans under my scheme seek to enrich themselves by exploiting the other races of the earth through their inventive skill (YI, 17-9-1925, 321).

The revival of the village is possible only when it is no more exploited. Industrialisation on a mass scale will necessarily lead to passive or active exploitation of the village as the problems of competition and marketing come in. Therefore we have to concentrate on the village being self-contained, manufacturing mainly for use. Provided this character of the village industry is maintained, there would be no objection to villages using even the modern machines and tools that they can make and can afford to use. Only, they should not be used as a means of exploitation of others (H, 29-8-1936, 226).

If I can convert the country to my point of view, the social order of the future will be based predominantly on the charkha and all it implies. It will include everything that promotes the well-being of the villagers. It will not exclude the industries mentioned by my correspondent so long as they do not smother the villages and village life. I do visualise electricity, ship-building, ironworks, machine-making and the like existing side by side with village handicrafts. But the order of dependence will be reversed. Hitherto the industrialisation has been so planned as to destroy the villages and village crafts. In the State of the future it will subserve the

villages and their crafts. I do not share the socialist belief that centralisation of the necessities of life will conduce to the common welfare when the centralised industries are planned and owned by the State (*H*, 27-1-1940, 428 ).

Under my scheme, nothing will be allowed to be produced by the cities which can be equally well produced by the villages. The proper function of cities is to serve as clearing houses for village products (*H*, 28-1-1939, 438 ).

A socialist holding a brief for machinery asked Gandhiji if the village industries movement was not meant to oust all machinery.

'Is not this wheel a machine ? ' was the counter-question that Gandhiji, who was just then spinning, gave in reply.

'I do not mean this machine, but I mean bigger machinery.'

'Do you mean Singer Sewing Machine ? That too is protected by the village industries movement, and for that matter any machinery which does not deprive masses of men of the opportunity to labour, but which helps the individual and adds to his efficiency, and which a man can handle at will without being its slave.'

'But what about the great inventions ? You would have nothing to do with electricity ?'

'Who said so ? If we could have electricity in every home, I should not mind villagers plying their implements and tools with the help of electricity. But then the village communities or the State would own power houses, just as they have their grazing pastures. But where there is no electricity and no machinery, what are idle hands to do ? Will you give them work, or would you have their owner cut them down for want of work ?

'I would prize every invention of science made for the benefit of all. There is a difference between invention and invention. I should not care for the asphyxiating gases capable of killing masses of men at a time. The heavy machinery for work of public utility which cannot be undertaken by human labour has its inevitable place, but all that would be

owned by the State and used entirely for the benefit of the people. I can have no consideration for machinery which is meant either to enrich the few at the expense of the many, or without cause to displace the useful labour of many.

'But even you as socialist would not be in favour of an indiscriminate use of machinery. Take printing presses. They will go on. Take surgical instruments. How can one make them with one's hands? Heavy machinery would be needed for them. But there is no machinery for the cure of idleness but this', said Gandhiji pointing to his spinning wheel. 'I can work it whilst I am carrying on this conversation with you, and am adding a little to the wealth of the country. This machine no one can oust' (*H*, 22-6-1935, 146).

Q. Then you are fighting not against machinery as such, but against its abuses which are so much in evidence to-day?

A. I would unhesitatingly say, yes; but I would add that scientific truths and discoveries should first of all cease to be mere instruments of greed. Then labourers will not be overworked and machinery, instead of becoming a hindrance will be a help. I am aiming not at eradication of all machinery, but limitation.

Q. When logically argued that would seem to imply that all complicated power-driven machinery should go?

A. It might have to go, but I must make one thing clear. The supreme consideration is man. The machine should not tend to make atrophied the limbs of man. For instance, I would make intelligent exceptions. Take the case of the Singer Sewing Machine. It is one of the few useful things ever invented, and there is a romance about the device itself. Singer saw his wife labouring over the tedious process of sewing and seaming with her own hand, and simply out of his love for her devised the sewing machine in order to save her from unnecessary labour. He, however, saved not only her labour but also the labour of everyone who could purchase a sewing machine.

Q. But in that case there would have to be a factory for making these Singer Sewing Machines, and it would have to contain power-driven machinery of ordinary type?

A. Yes, but I am socialist enough to say that such factories should be nationalised, or State-controlled. They ought only to be working under the most attractive and ideal conditions, not for profit, but for the benefit of humanity, love taking the place of greed as the motive. It is an alteration in the conditions of labour that I want. This mad rush for wealth must cease, and the labourer must be assured, not only of a living wage, but a daily task that is not a mere drudgery. The machine will, under these conditions, be as much a help to the man working it as to the State, or the man who owns it. The present mad rush will cease, and the labourer will work (as I have said) under attractive and ideal conditions. This is but one of the exceptions I have in mind. The sewing machine had love at its back. The individual is the one supreme consideration. The saving of labour of the individual should be the object, and honest humanitarian consideration, and not greed, the motive. Replace greed by love and everything will come right (YI, 13-11-1924, 378).

<sup>8</sup>The world today (he wrote) is moving towards the ideal of collective or co-operative effort in every department of life. Much in this line has been and is being accomplished. It has come into our country also, but in such a distorted form that our poor have not been able to reap its benefits. *Pari passu* with the increase in our population land-holdings of the average farmer are daily decreasing. Moreover what the individual possesses is often fragmentary. For such farmers to keep cattle in their homes is a suicidal policy ; and yet this is their condition today ... (Then he recommended certain practical measures for collective cow-farming, after which he continued :) I firmly believe too that we shall not derive the full benefits of agriculture until we take to co-operative farming. Does it not stand to reason that it is far better for a hundred families in a village to cultivate their lands collectively and divide the income therefrom than to divide the land anyhow into hundred portions ? And what applies to land applies equally to cattle.

It is quite another matter that it may be difficult to convert people to adopt this way of life straightaway. The straight and narrow road is always hard to traverse. Every step

in the programme of cow service is strewn with thorny problems. But only by surmounting difficulties can we hope to make the path easier. My purpose for the time being is to show the great superiority of collective cattle farming over the individual effort. I hold further that the latter is wrong and the former only is right. In reality the individual can only safeguard his independence through co-operation. In cattle farming the individual effort has led to selfishness and inhumanity, whereas the collective effort can abate both the evils, if it does not remove them altogether (*H*, 15-21-942, 39).

<sup>9</sup>Mediæval times may have been bad, but I am not prepared to condemn things simply because they are mediæval. The spinning wheel is undoubtedly mediæval, but seems to have come to stay. Though the article is the same, it has become a symbol of freedom and unity as at one time, after the advent of the East India Company, it had become a symbol of slavery. Modern India has found in it a deeper and truer meaning than our forefathers dreamt of (*H*, 16-10-1937, 300).

## CHAPTER THREE

# SWARAJ AND THE STATE

### The Fundamentals

It was in his book *Hind-Swaraj or Indian Home Rule* that Gandhi first clearly enunciated his ideal of Swaraj or self-rule. While drawing a comparison between Italy and India, he wrote :

‘If you believe that because Italians rule Italy the Italian nation is happy, you are groping in darkness. Mazzini has shown conclusively that Italy did not become free. Victor Emanuel gave one meaning to the expression ; Mazzini gave another. According to Emanuel, Cavour and even Garibaldi, Italy meant the King of Italy and his henchmen. According to Mazzini, it meant the whole of the Italian people, that is, its agriculturists. Emanuel was only its servant. The Italy of Mazzini still remains in a state of slavery. At the time of the so-called national war, it was a game of chess between two rival kings with the people of Italy as pawns. The *working classes*\* in that land are still unhappy. They, therefore, indulge in assassination, rise in revolt, and rebellion on their part is always expected. What substantial gain did Italy obtain after the withdrawal of the Austrian troops ? The gain was only nominal. The reforms for the sake of which the war was supposed to have been undertaken have not yet been granted. The condition of the people in general still remains the same. I am sure you do not wish to reproduce such a condition in India. I believe that you want the millions of India to be happy, *not that you want the reins of Government in your hands.*\* If that be so, we have to consider only one thing : *how can the millions obtain self-rule ?*\* You will admit that people under

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\*Italics, present author's.

several Indian princes are being ground down. The latter mercilessly crush them. Their tyranny is greater than that of the English, and if you want such tyranny in India, then we shall never agree. My patriotism does not teach me that I am to allow people to be crushed under the heel of Indian princes if only the English retire. If I have the power, I should resist the tyranny of Indian princes just as much as that of the English. By patriotism I mean the welfare of the whole people, and if I could secure it at the hands of the English, I should bow down my head to them. If any Englishman dedicated his life to securing the freedom of India, resisting tyranny and serving the land, I should welcome that Englishman as an Indian' (*IHR*, 36).

Long afterwards, he similarly wrote :

'I, however, feel that fundamentally the disease is the same in Europe as it is in India, in spite of the fact that in the former country the people enjoy political self-government. No mere transference of political power in India will satisfy my ambition, even though I hold such transference to be a vital necessity of Indian national life. The peoples of Europe have no doubt political power but no Swaraj. Asian and African races are exploited for their partial benefit, and they, on their part, are being exploited by the ruling class or caste under the sacred name of democracy. At the root, therefore, the disease appears to be the same as in India. The same remedy is, therefore, likely to be applicable. Shorn of all the camouflage, the exploitation of the masses of Europe is sustained by violence.

'Violence on the part of the masses will never remove the disease. Anyway up to now experience shows that success of violence has been short-lived. It has led to greater violence. What has been tried hitherto has been a variety of violence and artificial checks, mainly dependent upon the will of the violent. At the crucial moment these checks have naturally broken down. It seems to me, therefore, that sooner or later, the European masses will have to take to non-violence if they are to find their deliverance. That there is no hope of their taking to it in a body and at once does not baffle me. A few



thousand years are but a speck in the vast time circle. Someone has to make a beginning with a faith that will not flinch. I doubt not that the masses, even of Europe, will respond, but what is more emergent in point of time is not so much a large experiment in non-violence as a precise grasp of the meaning of deliverance.

‘From what will the masses be delivered ? It will not do to have a vague generalisation and to answer “from exploitation and degradation”. Is not the answer this that they want to occupy the status that capital does today ? If so it can be attained only by violence. But if they want to shun the evils of capital, in other words, if they would revise the view-point of capital, they would strive to attain a juster distribution of the products of labour. This immediately takes us to contentment and simplicity, voluntarily adopted. Under the new outlook multiplicity of material wants will not be the aim of life, the aim will be rather their restriction consistently with comfort. *We shall cease to think of getting what we can but we shall decline to receive what all cannot get.\** It occurs to me that it ought not to be difficult to make a successful appeal to the masses of Europe in terms of economics and a fairly successful working of such an experiment must lead to immense and unconscious spiritual results. I do not believe that the spiritual law works in a field of its own. On the contrary, it expresses itself only through the ordinary activities of life. It thus affects the economic, the social and the political fields. If the masses of Europe can be persuaded to adopt the view I have suggested, it will be found that violence will be wholly unnecessary to attain the aim and they can easily come to their own by following the obvious corollaries of non-violence. It may even be that what seems to me to be so natural and feasible for India, may take longer to permeate the inert Indian masses than the active European masses’ (YI, 3-9-1925, 304).

We make no apology for reproducing the above long passages, for the whole argument in favour of non-violence in relation to self-rule of the masses or Swaraj is briefly and clearly laid down here. Gandhi never wearied of emphasizing this argu-

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\*Italics, present author's.

ment whenever there was an occasion to do so. He was so emphatic about the difference between Swaraj and mere political freedom, and the uselessness of violence as a means of attainment of the former that he wrote once :

‘I contend that the revolutionary method cannot succeed in India. If an open warfare were a possibility, I may concede that we may tread the path of violence that the other countries have and at least evolve the qualities that bravery on the battlefield brings forth. But attainment of Swaraj through warfare I hold to be an impossibility for any time that we can foresee. Warfare may give us another rule for the English rule but not self-rule in terms of the masses. The pilgrimage to Swaraj is a painful climb. It requires attention to details. It means vast organising ability, it means penetration into the villages solely for the service of the villagers. In other words it means national education that is education of the masses. It means an awakening of national consciousness among the masses. It will not spring like the magician’s mango. It will grow almost unperceived like the banian tree. A bloody revolution will never perform the trick. Haste here is most certainly waste’ (YI, 21-5-1925, 178).

### On Anarchism

Closely related to Gandhi’s idea that common people should be able to control the rulers at the centre by means of non-violent non-co-operation, lies also his other opinion that men should have as little to do as possible with the State in regulating social life ; for the latter is ultimately based on violence. This leaning towards anarchism occurs in his writings, now and then, in spite of the fact that in actual life, he led the battle for the establishment of a democratic State for India. Thus, for instance, he wrote in 1931 :

‘To me political power is not an end but one of the means of enabling people to better their condition in every department of life. Political power means capacity to regulate national life through national representatives. If national life becomes so perfect as to become self-regulated, no representation is necessary. There is then a state of enlightened anarchy. In such a state every one is his own ruler. He rules himself

in such a manner that he is never a hindrance to his neighbour. In the ideal state, therefore, there is no political power because there is no State. But the ideal is never fully realised in life. Hence the classical statement of Thoreau that that Government is best which governs the least (VI, 2-7-1931, 162).

Mahadev Desai reported a conversation on the same subject in the *Hariljan* of 1940 :

But are we not being driven to philosophical anarchism ? Is that not an impossible ideal ? These questions were asked by a philosophical friend some months ago and Gandhiji gave him replies which I think will be useful today.

‘Does anyone know true non-violence ?’ he asked.

Gandhiji immediately replied : ‘Nobody knows it, for nobody can practise perfect non-violence.’

‘Then how can it be used in politics ?’

‘It can be used in politics precisely as it can be used in the domestic sphere. We may not be perfect in our use of it, but we definitely discard the use of violence, and grow from failure to success.’

‘You would govern non-violently. But all legislation is violence.’

‘No, not all legislation. Legislation imposed by people upon themselves is non-violence to the extent it is possible in society. A society organised and run on the basis of complete non-violence would be the purest anarchy.’

‘Do you think it is a realisable ideal ?’

‘Yes. It is realisable to the extent non-violence is realisable. That State is perfect and non-violent where the people are governed the least. The nearest approach to purest anarchy would be a democracy based on non-violence. The European democracies are to my mind a negation of democracy.’

‘Do you think that non-violence or democracy that you visualise was ever realised in the olden times ?’

‘I do not know. But if it was not, it only means that we had never made the attempt to realise the highest in us. I

have no doubt in my mind that at some stage we were wiser and that we have to grow wiser than we are today in order to find what beauties are hidden in human nature. Perfect non-violence is impossible so long as we exist physically, for we would want some space at least to occupy. Perfect non-violence whilst you are inhabiting the body is only a theory like Euclid's point or straight line, but we have to endeavour every moment of our lives' (*H*, 27-7-1910 211).

The theoretical position held by Gandhi is thus entirely different from that of Marxian Socialism. According to the latter, the first step needful is to capture the State by means of violence and place it under the dictatorship of the proletariat. The State machinery would then be employed to root out all forms of exploitation, and also educate men into a new frame of mind. When this is accomplished, the people's voluntary organizations will gradually take over the functions of the State, which would then wither away. But during the transition period, the State should be all-powerful for defending the life and interests of the people. Gandhi, on the other hand, believed that true defence is only possible under non-violence in which the heart of the exploiter is changed by non-cooperation. The chief function of the State is thus transferred from the army to the people directly, under organised non-violence. The people also begin to regulate their economic and political life, as far as possible, by means of voluntary associations, i.e. democratic organizations from the present moment. In other words, the chief difference between Marxian Socialism and Gandhi's anarchistic ideal lies in the fact that, in the latter, the withering away of the State begins from the immediate present instead of being postponed till a period when all possible opposition has already been liquidated by means of intense centralization of social authority, brought about through violence.

But in spite of his insistence upon Anarchism, Gandhi was not indifferent, like some Anarchists, to the machinery of the State so long as it was a necessity. His practical nature led him towards a full democratic control of the State ; under no circumstances was he prepared to put up with totalitarian-

ism, i.e. suppression of opposition by means of violence, even if it was in the immediate interest of the masses.

### India's Swaraj

Speaking before the Federation of the Indian Chambers of Commerce on the eve of his voyage to England in 1931, Gandhi tried to define in practical terms his concept of the duties of the State in free India. He said :

'It has been said that Indian Swaraj will be the rule of the majority community, i.e., the Hindus. There could not be a greater mistake than that. If it were to be true, I for one would refuse to call it Swaraj and would fight it with all the strength at my command, for to me Hind Swaraj is the rule of all the people, is the rule of justice. Whether under that rule the ministers were Hindus or Musalmans or Sikhs, and whether the legislatures were exclusively filled by the Hindus or Musalmans or any other community, they would have to do even-handed justice. And just as no community in India need have any fear of Swaraj being monopolised by any other, even so the English should have no fear. The question of safeguards should not arise at all. Swaraj would be real Swaraj only when there would be no occasion for safeguarding any such rights. I may tell you that the Congress does not belong to any particular group of men ; it belongs to all, but the protection of the poor peasantry, which forms the bulk of the population, must be its primary interest. The Congress must, therefore, truly represent the poor. But that does not mean that all other classes—the middle classes, the capitalist or zamindar—must go under. All that it aims at is that all other classes must subserve the interest of the poor' (VI, 16-4-1931, 78, 79).

In an article written in the *Young India*, the same idea was repeated in the following terms :

'I will therefore state the purpose. It is complete freedom from the alien yoke in every sense of the term, and this for the sake of the dumb millions. Every interest, therefore, that is hostile to their interest, must be revised, or must subside if it is not capable of revision' (VI, 17-9-1931, 263).

'By Swaraj I mean the Government of India by the consent of the people, ascertained by the vote of the largest number of the adult population, male or female, native born or domiciled who have contributed *by manual labour*\* to the service of the State and who have taken the trouble of having their names registered as voters. I hope also (to demonstrate) that real Swaraj will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused. In other words, Swaraj is to be attained by educating the masses into a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority' (YI, 29-1-1925, 40).

Similary he said in 1941 :

'We have been long accustomed to think that power comes through Legislative Assemblies. I have regarded this belief as a grave error brought about by inertia or hypnotism. A superficial study of British History has made us think that all power percolates to the people from parliaments. The truth is that power resides in the people and it is entrusted for the time being to those whom they may choose as their representatives. Parliaments have no power or even existence independently of the people. It has been my effort for the last twentyone years to convince the people of this simple truth. Civil Disobedience is the storehouse of power. Imagine a whole people unwilling to conform to the laws of the legislature and prepared to suffer the consequences of non-compliance ! They will bring the whole legislative and executive machinery to a standstill. The police and the military are of use to coerce minorities, however powerful they may be. But no police or military coercion can bend the resolute will of a people, out for suffering to the uttermost' (IP, 5).

## CHAPTER FOUR

# THE THEORY OF TRUSTEESHIP

### Introduction

Gandhi perhaps used the terms 'trustee' and 'trusteeship' for the first time in his *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule* in 1909. On the occasion of the opening ceremony of the Benares Hindu University on 4 February 1916, he also delivered a speech in which he appealed to the 'richly bedecked noblemen' present on the dais to strip themselves of the jewellery and 'hold it in trust' for their countrymen in India.<sup>1</sup>

On the eve of the Salt Satyagraha in 1930, he wrote about what he felt was standing in the way of India's freedom.

'The greatest obstacle in the path of non-violence is the presence in our midst of the indigenous interests that have sprung up from British rule, the interests of monied men, speculators, scrip-holders, landholders, factory owners and the like. All these do not always realise that they are living on the blood of the masses, and when they do, they become as callous as the British principals whose tools and agents they are. If, like the Japanese Samurai, they could but realise that they must give up their blood-stained gains, the battle is won for non-violence. It must not be difficult for them to see that the holding of millions is a crime when millions of their own kith and kin are starving and therefore they must give up their agency. No principal has yet been found able to work without faithful agents.

'But non-violence has to be patient with these as with the British principal. The aim of the non-violent worker must ever be to convert' (VI, 6.2-1930, 44).

Holding these views as he did, Gandhi advised the Indian National Congress on its assumption of office under the Reforms of 1935 to tax riches heavily. Incidentally, he laid down the principal that the 'inheritance (of wealth) should rightly belong to the nation'.<sup>2</sup> This is a topic which will be more fully discussed later on in the chapter.

### Equality of Wages

It was in 1904 that Gandhi derived an idea from Ruskin, namely, that

'A lawyer's work has the same value as a barber's, inasmuch as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work' (*Auto*, 365).

He also subscribed to Tolstoy's theory of bread-labour, according to which no man was free from the obligation of body-labour for the production of the elementary necessities of life. This was a law which should apply to intellectual workers as well. They too were not to be exempted from its operation.

The following question was therefore placed before him in 1947 for clarification.

'Q. Why should we insist on a Rabindranath or Raman earning his bread by manual labour? Is it not sheer wastage? Why should not brain workers be on a par with manual workers? Both perform useful social work.

A. Intellectual work is important and has an undoubted place in the scheme of life. But what I insist is the necessity of physical labour for all. No man ought to be free from that obligation. It would serve to improve even the quality of his intellectual output. I venture to say that in ancient times Brahmans worked with their body as with their mind. But even if they did not, body labour is a proved necessity at the present time. In this connection I would refer to the writings of Tolstoy and how he made famous the theory of Bread Labour which was first propounded in his country by the Russian peasant Bondaref (*H*, 23-2-1947, 36).



'Q. You wrote about economic equality in 1941. Do you hold that all persons who perform useful and necessary service in society, whether farmer or *bhangī*, engineer or accountant, doctor or teacher, have a moral right only to equal wages 'with the rest? Of course, it is understood, educational or other expenses shall be a charge of the State. Our question is, should not all persons get the same wages for their personal needs? Do you not think that if we work for this equality, it will cut sooner under the root of untouchability than any other process?

'A. As to this he had no doubt that if India was to live an exemplary life of independence which would be the envy of the world, all the *bhangīs*, doctors, lawyers, teachers, merchants and others would get the same wages for an honest day's work. Indian society may never reach the goal but it was the duty of every Indian to set his sail towards that goal and no other if India was to be a happy land' (H, 16-3-1947, 67).

### Class war

The question arose again and again in India as to what should be done about the landlord. In 1929, Gandhi referred to them in one of his writings and warned 'the capitalist class to read the sign of the times and revise their notions of God-given right to all they possess'. In the same article, he also wrote that unless they divested themselves of their right voluntarily and 'woke up betimes', the country would be plunged in chaos when the ignorant and famishing millions became awakened.<sup>3</sup>

During the second world war, he wrote thus on the same topic :

'I have visions that the end of this war will mean also the end of the rule of capital. . I see coming the day of the rule of the poor, whether that rule be through force of arms or of non-violence' (H, 1-2-1942, 20).

In 1940, Gandhi revised his Constructive Programme, and included within its aims 'economic equality', which was des-

cribed as the 'master-key to non-violent independence'. This is how he explained 'equality' :

'The real implication of equal distribution is that each man shall have the wherewithal to supply all his natural needs and no more. For example, if one man has a weak digestion and requires only a quarter of a pound of flour for his bread and another needs a pound, both should be in a position to satisfy their wants. To bring this ideal into being the entire social order has got to be reconstructed. A society based on non-violence cannot nurture any other ideal. We may not perhaps be able to realise the goal, but we must bear it in mind and work unceasingly to near it. To the same extent as we progress towards our goal we shall find contentment and happiness, and to that extent too shall we have contributed towards the bringing into being of a non-violent society.

'It is perfectly possible for an individual to adopt this way of life without having to wait for others to do so. And if an individual can observe a certain rule of conduct, it follows that a group of individuals can do likewise. It is necessary for me to emphasise the fact that no one need wait for anyone else in order to adopt a right course. Men generally hesitate to make a beginning if they feel that the objective cannot be had in its entirety. Such an attitude of mind is in reality a bar to progress.

'Now let us consider how equal distribution can be brought about through non-violence. The first step towards it is for him who has made this ideal part of his being to bring about the necessary changes in his personal life. He would reduce his wants to a minimum, bearing in mind the poverty of India. His earnings would be free of dishonesty. The desire for speculation would be renounced. His habitation would be in keeping with the new mode of life. There would be self-restraint exercised in every sphere of life. When he has done all that is possible in his own life, then only will he be in a position to preach this ideal among his associates and neighbours.

'Indeed at the root of this doctrine of equal distribution must lie that of the trusteeship of the wealthy for the

superfluous wealth possessed by them. For according to the doctrine they may not possess a rupee more than their neighbours. How is this to be brought about ? Non-violently ? Or should the wealthy be dispossessed of their possessions ? To do this we would naturally have to resort to violence. This violent action cannot benefit society. Society will be the poorer, for it will lose the gifts of a man who knows how to accumulate wealth. Therefore the non-violent way is evidently superior. The rich man will be left in possession of his wealth, of which he will use what he reasonably requires for his personal needs and will act as a trustee for the remainder to be used for the society. In this argument, honesty on the part of the trustee is assumed

‘If, however, in spite of the utmost effort, the rich do not become guardians of the poor in the true sense of the term and the latter are more and more crushed and die of hunger, what is to be done ? In trying to find out the solution to this riddle I have lighted on non-violent non-co-operation and civil disobedience as the right and infallible means. The rich cannot accumulate wealth without the co-operation of the poor in society. If this knowledge were to penetrate to and spread amongst the poor, they would become strong and would learn how to free themselves by means of non-violence from the crushing inequalities which have brought them to the verge of starvation’ (*H*, 25-8-1940, 260).

This naturally brings the Gandhian aim as well as the programme of non-violent non-co-operation very close to some forms of socialism. Many of his countrymen noticed this and asked him to explain where his difference lay with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.

The answer was furnished in the following terms.

‘Q. Your actual economic policy would differ from Mr. Nehru’s ? He, so far as I understand him, would wipe out the zamindar.  
non-v.

‘A. Yes, we seem to differ in our ideas of village uplift. In reconstruction. The difference is of emphasis. He does include the village uplift movement. He believes in indus-

trialisation ; I have grave doubt about its usefulness for India. He believes in the ultimate inevitability of class conflict though he would avoid it if he could. I expect to convert the zamindars and other capitalists by the non-violent method, and therefore there is for me nothing like an inevitability of class conflict. For it is an essential part of non-violence to go along the line of least resistance. The moment the cultivators of the soil realise their power, the zamindari evil will be sterilized. What can the poor zamindar do when they say that they will simply not work the land unless they are paid enough to feed and clothe and educate themselves and their children in a decent manner ? In reality the toiler is the owner of what he produces. If the toilers intelligently combine, they will become an irresistible power. That is how I do not see the necessity of class conflict. If I thought it inevitable I should not hesitate to preach it and teach it' (H, 5-12-1936, 339).

'Exploitation of the poor can be extinguished not by effecting the destruction of a few millionaires, but by removing the ignorance of the poor and teaching them to non-co-operate with their exploiters. That will convert the exploiters also. I have even suggested that ultimately it will lead to both being equal partners. Capital as such is not evil ; it is its wrong use that is evil. Capital in some form or other will always be needed' (H, 28-7-1940, 219).

The reader will notice that when the term 'class war' was used by Gandhi, he always meant war in terms of violence. He never looked upon satyagraha for the sake of establishment of economic equality as 'war' because it was non-violent. Yet, in the sense in which Marx himself used the term, such non-violent non-co-operation would be no less a form of class war than its violent manifestation.

### **A New Implication of Trusteeship**

In February 1942, a distinguished follower of Mahatma Gandhi, namely, Shankarrao Deo raised the following questions :

'Q. Why first earn crores and then use them for society ? As society today is constituted the means of earning crores are

bound to be impure ; and one who earns crores by impure means cannot be expected to follow the *mantram tena tyaktena bhunjithah* because in the very process of earning crores by impure means the man's character is bound to be tainted or vitiated. I request you to emphasise as much, if not more, the purity of means of earning money as on spending. If purity of means is strictly observed, then, according to me, crores could not be accumulated at all and the difficulty of spending for society will assume a very minor prospect.'

Gandhiji proceeded in the following weeks to develop the implications of non-violence and trusteeship in a fuller manner. He first said in answer to Shankerrao :

'In the application of the method of non-violence one must believe in the possibility of every person, however depraved, being reformed under humane and skilled treatment (H, 22-2-1942, 49).

He also said ;

'But I accept the proposition that it is better not to desire wealth than to acquire it and become its trustee. I gave up my own long ago, which should be proof enough of what I would like others to do. But what am I to advise those who are already wealthy or who would not shed the desire for wealth ? I can only say to them that they should use their wealth for service.

'Personally I do not believe in inherited riches. The well-to-do should educate and bring up their children so that they may learn how to be independent. The tragedy is that they do not do so. Their children do get some education, they even recite verses in praise of poverty, but they have no compunction about helping themselves to parental wealth. That being so, I exercise my common sense and advise what is practicable' (H, 1-3-1942, 67).

Someone asked him the following question next month :

'Q. From your writings one gathers the notion that your 'trustee' is not anything more than a very benevolent philanthropist and donor, such as the first Parsi Baronet, the Tatas, the Wadias, the Birlas, Shri Bajaj and the like. Is that

so ? Will you please explain whom you regard as the primary or rightful beneficiaries of the possessions of a rich man ? Is there to be a limit to the amount or part of the income and capital which he can spend upon himself, his kith and kin and for non-public purposes ? Can one who exceeds such limit be prevented from doing so ? If he is incompetent or otherwise fails to discharge his obligations as a trustee, can he be removed and called upon to render accounts by a beneficiary or the State ? Do the same principles apply to princes and zamindars, or is their trusteeship of a different nature ?

‘A. If the trusteeship idea catches, philanthropy, as we know it, will disappear. Of those you have named only Jamnalalji came near, but only near, it. A trustee has no heir but the public. In a State built on the basis of non-violence, the commission of trustees will be regulated. Princes and zamindars will be on a par with other men of wealth (*H*, 12-4-1942, 116).

Similarly in 1934 he had said :

‘Q. Suppose an artist leaves certain pictures to a son who does not appreciate their value for the nation and sells them or wastes them so that the nation stands to lose something precious through one man’s folly. If you are assured that the son would never be a trustee in the sense in which you would like to have him, do you not think the State would be justified in taking away those articles from him with the minimum use of violence ?

‘A. Yes, the State will, as a matter of fact, take away those things and I believe it will be justified if it uses the minimum of violence. But the fear is always there that the State may use too much violence against those who differ from it. I would be very happy indeed if the people concerned behaved as trustees, but if they fail, I believe we shall have to deprive them of their possessions through the State with the minimum exercise of violence. That is why I said at the Round Table Conference that every vested interest must be subject to scrutiny and confiscation ordered where necessary—with or without compensation as the case demanded.

What I would personally prefer would be not a centralization of power in the hands of the State, but an extension of the sense of trusteeship, as in my opinion the violence of private ownership is less injurious than the violence of the State.

It is my firm conviction that if the State suppressed capitalism by violence, it will be caught in the coils of violence itself and fail to develop non-violence at any time. The State represents violence in a concentrated and organized form. The individual has a soul, but as the State is a soulless machine, it can never be weaned from the violence to which it owes its very existence. Hence I prefer the doctrine of trusteeship.'

### **Inequality of Personal Income**

Perhaps with the progress of time and gathering experience, Gandhi began to feel that it would not be possible to recommend equality of wages as a desirable goal before the nation. So, while still holding on to equality as an ideal, he toned down the practical goal and said that he would put up with inequality of income to a limited extent.<sup>4</sup> People of talent would be allowed to earn more.

'I would allow a man of intellect to earn more, I would not cramp his talent. But the bulk of his greater earnings must be used for the good of the State, just as the income of all earning sons of the father go to the common family fund' (YI, 26-11-1931, 368).

### **Inheritance**

Perhaps unequal wages earned by individuals would not matter very much, and may even be conducive to good, if the inheritance belongs to the nation, and there is a gentle curb upon the way in which the man who earns is allowed to spend his money.

In any case, the question of inheritance is important, because, if this is done away with, then the main pillar upon which the formation of a propertied class rests, will also disappear.

‘Q. You have asked rich men to be trustees. Is it implied that they should give up private ownership in their property and create out of it a trust valid in the eyes of law and managed democratically ? How will the successor of the present incumbent be determined on his demise ?

‘A. In answer Gandhiji said that he adhered to the position taken by him years ago that everything belonged to God and was from God. Therefore it was for His people as a whole, not for a particular individual. When an individual had more than his proportionate portion he became a trustee of that portion for God’s people.

‘God who was all-powerful had no need to store. He created from day to day ; hence men also should in theory live from day to day and not stock things. If this truth was imbibed by the people generally, it would become legalized and trusteeship would become a legalized institution. He wished it became a gift from India to the world. Then there would be no exploitation and no reserves as in Australia and other countries for white men and their posterity. In these distinctions lay the seed of a war more virulent than the last two. As to the successor, the trustee in office would have the right to nominate his successor subject to legal sanction’ (*Selections*, 312).

‘Q. How would the successor of a trustee be determined ? Will he only have the right of proposing a name, the right of finalization being vested in the State ?

‘A. As he had said yesterday, choice should be given to the original owner who became the first trustee, but the choice must be finalized by the State. Such arrangement puts a check on the State as well as the individual.

‘Q. When the replacement of private by public property thus takes place through the operation of the theory of trusteeship, will the ownership vest in the State, which is an instrument of violence or in associations of a voluntary character like village communes and municipalities, which may, of course, derive their final authority from State-made laws ?

‘A. That question involved some confusion of thought. Legal ownership in the transformed condition vested in the



trustee, not in the State. It was to avoid confiscation that the doctrine of trusteeship came into play, retaining for the society the ability of the original owner in his own right. Nor did he, the speaker, hold that the State must always be based on violence. It might be so in theory, but the practice of the theory demanded a State which would for the most part be based on non-violence' (*Selections*, 313).

'To the landlords he said that if what was said against them was true, he would warn them that their days were numbered. They could no longer continue as lords and masters. They had a bright future if they became the trustees of the poor *kisans*. He had in mind not trustees in name but in reality. Such trustees would take nothing for themselves that their labour and care did not entitle them to. Then they would find that no law would be able to touch them. The *kisans* would be their friends' (*Selections*, 314).

'Q. You say that a *Raja*, a zamindar or a capitalist should be a trustee for the poor. Do you think that any such exist today ? Or do you expect them to be so transformed ?

'A. I think that some very few exist even today, though not in the full sense of the term. They are certainly moving in that direction. It can, however, be asked whether the present *Rajas* and others can be expected to become trustees of the poor. If they do not become trustees of their own accord, force of circumstances will compel the reform unless they court utter destruction. When *Panchayat Raj* is established, public opinion will do what violence can never do. The present power of the zamindars, the capitalists and the *Rajas* can hold sway only so long as the common people do not realize their own strength. If the people non-co-operate with the evil of *zamindari* or capitalism, it must die of inanition. In *Panchayat Raj* only the *Panchayat* will be obeyed and the *Panchayat* can only work through the laws of their making' (*Selections*, 315).

### On Talents

But supposing property which is now vested in private individuals is gradually converted into trust property, and economic equality established as far as practicable, will that

mean an end of the need of the theory of trusteeship ? Gandhi did not think so. Talents would still be there ; and Gandhi wished all talented persons to hold their talents in trust for society, just as he wished them to hold their inherited or personally acquired wealth also as parts of public trust. That is why he said that in the future society of his conception, no

‘person, whether prince or princely zamindar or merchant, can be sole owner or disposer of possessions hereditary or self-acquired. Every individual must have the fullest liberty to use his talents consistently with equal use by his neighbours, but no one is entitled to the arbitrary use of the gains from the talents. He is part of the nation or say the social structure surrounding him. Therefore he can use his talents not for self only but for the social structure of which he is but a part and on whose sufferance he lives’ (*H*, 2-8-1942, 249).

In other words, talents should be held in trust just as the means of production of the elementary necessities of life ought to be ; and this socialization should be brought about by the conversion of talented persons through organized non-violence. As such, the theory of trusteeship has a permanent value in human society.

To sum up, we may therefore say, that apart from its wider idealistic application as described above, even within the sphere of economic life, the Gandhian theory of trusteeship thus does not make for class collaboration but for class liquidation, as a friend of mine once very happily put it. This liquidation, which will result in all men turning into labourers and placing their mental and material resources at the service of humanity taken as a whole, will be effected not by the forceful regimentation of the exploiters by the exploited, but by a change of heart brought about among the exploiters by the non-violent non-co-operation of those on whom the former depend for the making, the retention and the employment of their wealth. In course of that struggle, the exploited will also become free from the weaknesses which have given rise to the present social inequalities. Under the new constitution of things brought into being by the joint endeavour of today’s hostile classes, all men will live as servants of the community,

willingly and joyfully, through a complete reorientation of life's values in a new direction. Through economic equality, society will also, in its turn, secure for every man full opportunity for the development of his physical, mental and moral powers without allowing him to restrict similar opportunity in others. And the product of those talents will be shared by all in common.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> I now introduce you to another scene. His Highness the Maharajah, who presided over our deliberations, spoke about the poverty of India. Other speakers laid great stress upon it. But what did we witness in the great pandal in which the foundation ceremony was performed by the Viceroy? Certainly a most gorgeous show, an exhibition of jewellery which made a feast for the eyes of the greatest jeweller who chose to come from Paris. I compare with the richly bedecked noblemen the millions of the poor. And I feel like saying to those noblemen: There is no salvation for India unless you strip yourselves of the jewellery and hold it in trust for your countrymen in India. Sir, whenever I hear of a great palace rising in any great city in India, be it in British India or be it in the India which is ruled by our great chiefs, I become jealous at once and I say: 'Oh, it is the money that has come from the agriculturists'. Over 75 per cent. of the population are agriculturists and Mr. Higginbotham told us last night in his own felicitous language that they are the men who grow two blades of grass in the place of one. But there cannot be much spirit of self-government about us if we take away or allow others to take away from them almost the whole of the results of their labour. Our salvation can only come through the farmer. Neither the lawyers, nor doctors, nor the rich landlords are going to secure it (*Natesan*, 322).

<sup>2</sup> Riches have not yet been sufficiently taxed. In this of all countries in the world possession of inordinate wealth by individuals should be held as a crime against Indian humanity. Therefore the maximum limit of taxation of riches beyond a

certain margin can never be reached. In England, I understand, they have already gone as far as 70% of the earnings beyond a prescribed figure. There is no reason why India should not go to a much higher figure. Why should there not be death duties? Those sons of millionaires who are of age and yet inherit, their parents' wealth are losers for the very inheritance. The nation thus becomes a double loser. *For the inheritance should rightly belong to the nation.\** And the nation loses again in that the full faculties of the heirs are not drawn out, being crushed under the load of riches (H, 31-7-1937, 197).

<sup>3</sup>They must regard themselves, even as the Japanese nobles did, as trustees holding their wealth for the good of their wards the ryots. Then they would take no more than a reasonable amount *as commission for their labours.\** At present there is no proportion between the wholly unnecessary pomp and extravagance of the moneyed class and the squalid surroundings and the grinding pauperism of the ryots in whose midst the former are living. A model Zamindar would therefore at once reduce much of the burden the ryot is now bearing, he would come in intimate touch with the ryots and know their wants and inject hope into them in the place of the despair which is killing the very life out of them. He will not be satisfied with the ryots' ignorance of the laws of sanitation and hygiene. He would reduce himself to poverty in order that the ryot may have the necessaries of life. He will study the economic condition of the ryots under his care, establish schools in which he will educate his own children side by side with those of the ryots. He will purify the village well and the village tank. He will teach the ryot to sweep his roads and clean his latrines by himself doing this necessary labour. He will throw open without reserve his own gardens for the unrestricted use of the ryot. He will use as hospital, school, or the like most of the unnecessary buildings which he keeps for his pleasure. If only the capitalist class will read the sign of the times, revise their notions of God-given right to all they possess, in an incredibly short space of time the seven hundred thousand dung-heaps, which today pass muster as villages, can be turned into abodes

of peace, health and comfort. I am convinced that the capitalist, if he follows the Samurai of Japan, has nothing really to lose and everything to gain. There is no other choice than between voluntary surrender on the part of the capitalist of superfluities and consequent acquisition of the real happiness of all on the one hand, and on the other the impending chaos into which, if the capitalist does not wake up betimes, awakened but ignorant, famishing millions will plunge, the country and which not even the armed force that a powerful Government can bring into play can avert' (YI, 5-12-1929, 396).

†We must appeal to the good in human beings and expect response. Is it not conducive to the well-being of society that every member uses all his talents, only not for personal aggrandisement but for the good of all? We do not want to produce a dead equality where every person becomes or is rendered incapable of using his ability to the utmost possible extent. Such a society must ultimately perish. I therefore suggest that my advice that monied men may earn crores (honestly only, of course) but so as to dedicate them to the service of all is perfectly sound. *Tena tyaktena bhunjithah* is a *mantra* based on uncommon knowledge. It is the surest method to evolve a new order of life of universal benefit in the place of the present one where each one lives for himself without regard to what happens to his neighbour (H, 22-2-1942, 49).

## CHAPTER FIVE

# AN INTERVIEW WITH MAHATMA GANDHI

On the 9th and 10th of November, 1934, we had a fairly long interview with Mahatma Gandhi at Wardha. The questions discussed related to fundamental social and political matters, and therefore a report of the interview will be both of interest and importance to the public. The report was submitted to Gandhiji for correction, and he sent it back in the following shape for publication in the *Modern Review* where it was published in October 1935.

### Question I

While working in a village we have found that the chief obstacle to any real improvement in the condition of the villagers are two in number.

(1) They have forgotten the art of co-operation or of combination in order to resist any encroachment upon their rights.

(2) They live practically enslaved by those who merely own land while doing no work, and control the money resources of the village. This slavery, which is due partly to outside conditions and partly to their own character, and our complete neglect of their education, have left the masses absolutely devoid of any will of their own.

What should be our principal object in khadi-work or other forms of village reconstruction? Khadi-work in some parts of Bengal has degenerated into a mere method of giving a little relief to the villagers, while it has failed to restore the will which alone can bring about any lasting transformation in their condition.

Our question is, should khadi be merely that sort of humanitarian work or should we use it chiefly as an instrument of political education ? Our experience has been that unless the ultimate objective is kept clearly in mind, it degenerates easily into a work of no significance.

### Answer I

The two issues of khadi and political organization should be kept absolutely separate. There must be no confusion. The aim of khadi is humanitarian ; but so far as India is concerned, its effect is bound to be immensely political.

The Salvation Army wants to teach people about God. But they come with bread. For the poor bread is their God. Similarly we should bring food to the people through khadi. If we succeed in breaking the idleness of the people through khadi, they will begin to listen to us. Whatever else the Government might do, it does leave some food for the villagers. Unless we can bring food to them, why should the people listen to us ? When we have taught them what they can do through their own efforts, they will want to listen to us.

That trust can be best generated through khadi. While working out the khadi programme, our aim should be purely humanitarian, that is economic. We should leave out all political considerations whatsoever. But it is bound to produce important political consequences which nobody can prevent and nobody need deplore.

[Note :—The expression 'our aim should be purely humanitarian, that is economic' does not mean that the khadi-worker should merely aim at providing some relief within the present social and economic framework. He should really aim at building up a new productive system based on the people's own effort and under their own control. The organizer should try to reduce unemployment to the utmost extent rather than aim at doubling or trebling the quantity of khadi produced for sale in distant markets.

The advice that the worker 'should teach the people what they can do through their own efforts' implies that he should

function in such a manner that, in the end, the people can be independent of his aid. In other words, his object should be to leave the common people self-acting in the end.

For the sake of efficiency also, he should not mix up constructive work with political propaganda. The growth of initiative and self-confidence, through khadi organization, will in its own time bear political consequences. There need not be any hurry for achieving quick results, in the usual sense of the term 'political'. When the masses have gained so much in self-development that they can see a wrong and are able to remedy it principally by their own non-violent effort, then their resistance becomes natural and of the right type.—N.K.B.]

### Question II

Could we not start small battles on local and specific issues against capitalism in the villages and use them as a means of strengthening the people or bringing about a sense of co-operation among them in preference to the khadi method? When we have a choice between the two, which should we prefer? If we have to sacrifice all the work that we have built up in villages in connection with khadi while fighting against the money-lender or the landed proprietor, for, say, a reduction in the rate of interest or increase in the share of agricultural produce, then what shall we do, provided the latter is more liable to evoke self-confidence among the villagers than the khadi method of organization?

### Answer II

It is a big proviso you have added at the end of the question. I cannot say if fights on local and specific issues against capitalists are more likely to generate the kind of determination and courage needed in a non-violent campaign. But if I concede you that point, then khadi would have to be sacrificed under the circumstances you quote. As a practical man, claiming to be an expert in non-violent methods, I should advise you not to go in for that type of work in order to train the masses in self-consciousness and attainment of power.



\* We are fighting for Swaraj in the non-violent way. If many workers in different parts of India engage in local battles of the sort you describe, then in times of necessity, the people all over India will not be able to make a common cause in a fight for Swaraj. Before civil disobedience can be practised on a vast scale, people must learn the art of civil or voluntary obedience. Our obedience to the Government is through fear ; and the reaction against it is either violence itself or that species of it which is cowardice. But through khadi we teach the people the art of civil obedience to an institution which they have built up for themselves. Only when they have learnt that art, can they successfully disobey something which they want to destroy in the non-violent way. That is why I should advise all workers not to fritter their fighting strength in many-sided battles, but to concentrate on peaceful khadi-work in order to educate the masses into a condition necessary for a successful practice of non-violent non-co-operation. With their own exploitation, boycott of foreign cloth through picketing may easily be violent ; through the use of khadi it is most natural and absolutely non-violent.

### Question III

Is love or non-violence compatible with possession or exploitation in any shape or form ? If possession and non-violence cannot go together, then do you advocate the maintenance of private ownership of land or factories as an unavoidable evil which will continue so long as individuals are not ripe or educated enough to do without it ? If it be such a step, would it not be better to own all the land through the State and place the State under the control of the masses ?

### Answer III

Love and exclusive possession can never go together. Theoretically when there is perfect love there must be perfect non-possession. The body is our last possession. So a man can only exercise perfect love and be completely dispossessed if he is prepared to embrace death and renounces his body for the sake of human service. But that is true in theory only.

In actual life, we can hardly exercise perfect love, for the body as a possession will always remain with us. Man will ever remain imperfect, and it will always be his part to try to be perfect. So that perfection in love or non-possession will remain an unattainable ideal so long as we are alive, but towards which we must ceaselessly strive.

Those who own money now are asked to behave like trustees holding their riches on behalf of the poor. You may say that trusteeship is a legal fiction. But if people meditate over it constantly and try to act up to it, then life on earth would be governed far more by love than it is at present. Absolute trusteeship is an abstraction like Euclid's definition of a point, and is equally unattainable. But if we strive for it, we shall be able to go farther in realizing a state of equality on earth than by any other method.

Q. If you say that private possession is incompatible with non-violence, why do you put up with it ?

A. That is a concession one has to make to those who earn money, but who would not voluntarily use their earnings far the benefit of mankind.

Q. Why then not have State ownership in place of private ownership and thus minimize violence ?

A. It is better than private ownership. But that too is objectionable on the ground of violence. It is my firm conviction that if the State suppressed capitalism by violence, it will be caught in the coils of violence itself and fail to develop non-violence at any time. The State represents violence in a concentrated and organized form. The individual has a soul, but as the State is a soulless machine, it can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence. Hence I prefer the doctrine of trusteeship.

Q. Let us come to a specific instance. Suppose an artist leaves certain pictures to a son who does not appreciate their value for the nation and sells them or wastes them, so that the nation stands to lose something precious through one man's folly. If you are assured that the son would never be a trustee in the sense in which you would like to have him, do you not

think the State would be justified in taking away those things from him with the minimum use of violence ?

A. Yes, the State will, as a matter of fact, take away those things, and I believe it will be justified if it uses the minimum of violence. But the fear is always there that the State may use too much violence against those who differ from it. I would be very happy indeed if the people concerned behaved as trustees ; but if they fail, I believe we shall have to deprive them of their possessions through the State with the minimum exercise of violence. That is why I said at the Round Table Conference that every vested interest must be subjected to scrutiny and confiscation ordered where necessary, with or without compensation as the case demanded.

What I would personally prefer would be not a centralization of power in the hands of the State, but an extension of the sense of trusteeship, as in my opinion the violence of private ownership is less injurious than the violence of the State. However, if it is unavoidable, I would support a minimum of State ownership.

Q. Then, Sir, shall we take it that the fundamental difference between you and the Socialists is that you believe that men live more by self-direction or will than by habit, and they believe that men live more by habit than by will, that being the reason why you strive for self-correction, while they try to build up a system under which men will find it impossible to exercise their desire of exploiting others ?

A. While admitting that man actually lives by habit, I hold that it is better for him to live by the exercise of will. I also believe that men are capable of developing their will to an extent that will reduce exploitation to a minimum. I look upon an increase of the power of the State with the greatest fear, because, although while apparently doing good by minimizing exploitation it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality, which lies at the root of all progress. We know of so many cases where men have adopted trusteeship, but none where the State has really lived for the poor.

Q. But have not those cases of trusteeship which you sometimes cite been due to your personal influence rather than to anything else ? Teachers like you come infrequently. Would it not be better, therefore, to trust to some organization to effect the necessary changes in man, rather than depend upon the casual advent of men like yourself ?

A. Leaving me aside, you must remember that the influence of all great teachers of mankind has outlived their lives. In the teaching of each prophet like Mohammed, Buddha or Jesus, there was a permanent element and there was another which was suited to the needs and requirements of the times. It is only because we try to keep up the permanent with the impermanent aspects of their teaching that there is so much distortion in religious practice today. But that apart, you can see that the influence of these men has sustained after they passed away. Moreover, what I disapprove of is an organization based on force which the State is. Voluntary organization there must be

#### Question IV

What then, Sir, is your ideal social order ?

#### Answer IV

I believe that every man is born in the world with certain natural tendencies. Every person is born with certain definite limitations which he cannot overcome. From a careful observation of those limitations the law of *varna* was deduced. It establishes certain spheres of action for certain people with certain tendencies. This avoided all unworthy competition. Whilst recognizing limitations, the law of *varna* admitted of no distinction of high and low : on the one hand it guaranteed to each the fruits of his labours and on the other it prevented him from pressing upon his neighbour. This great law has been degraded and fallen into disrepute. But my conviction is that an ideal social order will only be evolved when the implications of this law are fully understood and given effect to.

Q. Do you not think that in ancient India there was

much difference in economic status and social privileges between the four *varnas* ?

A. That may be historically true. But misapplication or an imperfect understanding of the law must not lead to the ignoring of the law itself. By constant striving we have to enrich the inheritance left to us. This law determines the duties of man. Rights follow from a due performance of duties. It is the fashion nowadays to ignore duties and assert or rather usurp rights.

Q. If you are so keen upon reviving *Varnashrama* why do you not favour violence as the quickest means ?

A. Surely the question does not arise. Definition and performance of duties rules out violence altogether.

Q. Should we not confine our pursuit of Truth to ourselves and not press it upon the world, because we know that it is ultimately limited in character ?

A. You cannot so circumscribe truth even if you try. Every expression of truth has in it the seeds of propagation, even as the sun cannot hide its light.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

# **CONFLICT AND ITS RESOLUTION IN HINDU CIVILIZATION\***

### **Introduction**

India has a vast population which comprises about one-sixth of the total human race. Its ancient history extends to nearly five thousand years from now, and there have lived within its boundaries different peoples who have been responsible for several distinct civilizations. These civilizations have not generally tried to oust one another ; but on the whole they have succeeded in living side by side after some amount of mutual readjustment. Within India's social structure also, we do not find any effort to fuse the different peoples into one undistinguishable whole. On the other hand, there has always been a conscious endeavour to form something like a confederation of peoples professing various cultures, if only they acknowledged certain broad principles in common. Indian society, therefore, has always presented a more or less stratified appearance, the various elements of which have been more distinctly defined than in the case of composite societies in other parts of the world.

The reason why this historical outline is presented above is that even with regard to such an item as the traditional means of settling disputes, we do not find in India, any exclusively single, traditional method. There have been warriors in India who have delighted in conquest or even the mere formal subjugation of their contemporaries ; while, on the other hand, there has also been a traditional acceptance

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of apparently opposite points of view, with a determined endeavour to find out what is common between the two, so that conciliation can be brought about on a new level of mutual understanding. Under these circumstances, it would perhaps be wrong to say that one particular point of view, or one specific tradition, is exclusively Indian while, the rest are aberrations. It would be more correct to say that there have been various traditions in Indian civilization which have varied in course of time, in different parts of India, or within the numerous strata which make up India's social organization. Yet, on the whole, it can also perhaps be justly said that more value has been attached to certain points of view than to others ; and these have generally originated from the belief that the views of men are all partial, and, in order to get the whole truth, it is best to try and find out what is unopposed within views which are apparently in opposition to one another.

### The Panchayat or Local Council

Up to the beginning of India's domination by Western powers, life was organized, more or less, on the basis of regional self-sufficiency in economic matters. Transport was on foot, or by means of animals or carriages drawn by them. Roads were comparatively few ; and the political influence exercised by kings was naturally feebler than what it is today. The direct result of this was that most of the disputes which arose in villages were settled by means of local, regional councils.

There is no term more universally used in India in this connection than *panchayat*, or council (of five). These panchayats have been of several kinds. Each caste extending over a distinct geographical region may have its own council, or the whole village may set up an *ad hoc* committee in which members of various castes sit together in order to decide upon questions in which all villagers are interested in common. As many of the castes are also like industrial or occupational guilds, their council may decide questions relating to the specific economic interests of the guild, or such social questions as arise in connection with marriage or the intercourse which its members may have with other castes.

In any case, before we proceed to describe the actual

manner in which panchayats settled disputes or administered justice, it may be necessary to draw attention to the relation which subsisted in the past between the panchayat and the State or the king.

The king was, of course, the supreme head of the State ; but it appears that in ancient India, he was not the *maker* of laws. Laws came from the guilds themselves ; or were derived from the sacred scriptures as interpreted from time to time by Brahman scholars. The *Gautama Samhita*, which is an ancient book of law, lays down the following rule :

19. His administration of justice (shall be regulated by) the Veda, the Institutions of the Sacred Law, the Angas, and the Puranas.

20. The laws of countries, castes, and families, which are not opposed to the (sacred) record, (have) also authority.

21. Cultivators, traders, herdsmen, money-lenders, and artisans (have authority to lay down rules) for their respective classes.

22. Having learned the (state of) affairs from those who (in each class) have authority (to speak he shall give) the legal decision.

23. Reasoning is a means for arriving at the truth.

24. Coming to a conclusion through that, he shall decide properly.

25. If (the evidence) is conflicting, he shall learn (the truth) from (Brahmanas) who are well versed in the three-fold sacred lore, and give his decision (accordingly).<sup>1</sup>

The historian, Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, examines the relation between the guilds and the king in great detail and comes to the following conclusions,

‘... . it is clear that the guild was recognised as a corporation in a law court where it was represented by selected members to contest the possession of a field, garden, etc.

\* \* \* \*

‘.....the executive officer could contract loan on behalf of the guild ;



‘ One could cease to be a member of the guild of his own accord.

‘Any of the Executive Officers who was guilty of any heinous criminal act, who created dissensions or who destroyed the property of the association, could be removed and the removal was only to be notified to, but not necessarily sanctioned by, the king. As the Executive Officers possessed great power it might not always have proved an easy affair to remove them if they assumed a defiant attitude. In such cases the matter was to be brought to the notice of the king. The king would hear both sides and, of course decide in such cases according to the special rules of the guilds..... He would then give his decision and enforce his decree’.<sup>2</sup>

The village or the caste panchayats were thus autonomous local bodies, subject to the supreme authority of the king.

### **Dispensation of Justice**

Let us now proceed to describe the various kinds of cases which were decided upon by these councils, and how the latter proceeded to enforce their decision.

Prof. T. W. Rhys Davids states in his *Buddhist India*, ‘the guilds are said to have had powers of arbitration between the members of the guild and their wives. The disputes between one guild and another were in the jurisdiction of the *Maha-setthi*, the Lord High Treasurer, who acted as a sort of Chief Alderman over the Aldermen of the guilds.’<sup>3</sup> More explicit references are furnished by R. Shamasastri in his translation of the regulations on statecraft by Kautilya, a work belonging to about three hundred years before Christ. Thus it is laid down in respect of ‘boundary disputes between two villages, (that) neighbours or elders of five or ten villages.....shall investigate the case on the evidence to be furnished from natural or artificial boundary marks .... Disputes concerning fields shall be decided by the elders of the neighbourhood or of the villages. If they are divided in their opinions, decision shall be sought for from a number of pure and respectable people, or, the disputants may equally divide the disputed holding among themselves. If both of these methods fail the holding under dispute shall be taken possession of by the king.’<sup>4</sup>

Professor Surendra Nath Sen made a special study of the administrative system of the Marathas, who were Hindu rulers over a considerable portion of India in the 18th century. He came to the conclusion that the Maratha rulers 'acted more like patriarchs of old than modern judges. What law there was, was not strictly enforced in civil suits. Legal exactitude was not their ideal. Amicable settlement was encouraged, and an attempt was always made to give a suitor every facility for proving his case.' Sometimes consideration was made for a defeated party to ensure good feeling between the parties in future. Thus in the suit of Maloji bin Shahaji Bhanga vs. Hiroji bin Narsoji Bhanga about the proprietary right of a piece of land although the latter had failed to substantiate his claim, the *Panch* directed Maloji to give Hiroji a site to build a house on and 30 bighas of land.

'A piece of land about 30 cubits in length and about 15 cubits in breadth in the inhabited portion of the aforesaid village and the Patilki right of 30 bighas of the superior, ordinary and inferior classes out of the cultivable land of the village have been given to Hiroji, son of Narsoji Bhanga by the assembled *got*' (*Got*—Castemen).<sup>5</sup>

Such human considerations were likewise brought into operation even in regard to punishment. Thus Sen says in regard to punishment for having brought false charges, '.....In the third instance Soyraji of Fort Narayangad was fined Rs. 50 for accusing Maini, daughter of Rakhamaji Repal of adultery with Shivaji a washerman. It is noteworthy that Maini proved her innocence by an ordeal by metal (that of drawing out a piece of metal from a potful of boiling oil). So in these cases of false complaints, the fine varied from Rs. 40 to 75. Evidently the offenders were men of small means, for during the administration of the same Peshwa and only ten years later, we find that Hanmant Bhat, brother of the Pratinidhi, was fined Rs. 1,000 for giving false evidence. This explains the policy of levying fine in proportion to the means of the offender. What would be a preventive in the case of Rama, a barber, could not be a preventive in the case of the Pratinidhi's brother.'<sup>6</sup>

It is likely, however, that the tradition of the panchayats became altered to a certain extent in course of time. A detailed study of how it operates at the present time in rural India is furnished by various census reports published by the Government of India. One of the fullest accounts was published in the *Census of India 1911, volume V, part I*, in respect of the eastern provinces of India. When we examine the records, we notice that the panchayat today has apparently become harsher in its treatment of delinquents or offenders. It tries to enforce collective decisions by evoking fear rather than love or respect.

There may be some fault in the matter of reporting ; or, it may also be that, divested as the panchayats have become of part of their power under an alien government, they perhaps became harsher or more intolerant in the enforcement of puritanistic social rules. It is also noticeable that many of the guiding principles in the ascertainment of truth are derived from the belief that truth becomes supernaturally vindicated under suitable circumstances.

In any case, it will be worth while to go through some of the observations published in contemporary reports

‘In the Orissa States, the Feudatory Chiefs still retain the authority of the old Hindu kings. All affairs relating to the castes are dealt with by Caste Councils, over whom there is a recognized President, often called a Behara. He is appointed in almost all States by the Chief on his own authority and motion ; in a few cases the views and wishes of the principal caste members are ascertained before making the appointment, and in a few other instances the castes are allowed to make their own selection. The Caste Council with the President decides all caste matters ; if disputes arise and the Caste Council is unable to decide the matter at issue, it is laid before the Chief, whose decision is final. There is also a recognized right of appeal from the finding of a Caste Council to the Chief, whose decision on appeal is binding. In dealing with these references on appeal, the Chiefs either decide the matter on their own authority or refer it to selected Brahmans and other respectable persons, who usually hold their delibera-

tions in the principal temple at the headquarters of the State. The opinion given by these bodies of arbitrators is laid before the Chief, who accepts, modifies, or alters it, as he thinks fit. The penalty for disobedience to the finding of the Chief on a caste matter is excommunication.

'In one State there is a powerful and highly organized caste, which not very long ago was seriously exercised by a charge that a certain young man of the caste had been cohabiting with a woman of very low caste. The charge attracted very considerable interest, and the caste was greatly perturbed and unsettled. A criminal prosecution for defamation failed, and the matter was finally brought to the stage of a Caste Council. Powerful influences were at work within the Caste, which is an extremely wealthy one, and the Caste Councillors split into two factions, supported by various members of the caste: the one faction was of opinion that the charge was true and that the offender should be excommunicated. The case was then laid before the Chief for his decision. A mass meeting was convened, and the case was heard in the principal temple of the State; the finding of the meeting was that the charge was not proved and the alleged culprit was declared innocent. This finding the Chief confirmed. The case, however, did not end here. The caste had split into two hostile camps over the case. The party who were for condemning the culprit were composed of somewhat the more influential members; they decided to refuse to accept the decision of the Chief and to treat the culprit as excommunicated. The Chief thereupon excommunicated the recalcitrant section of the caste, with the result that they were deprived of the services of the barbers, washermen and priests. So effectual and binding was this order, that not only did the barbers, washermen and priests of the State, who had hitherto served them, refuse to work for them, but the services could not be obtained even of barbers, washermen and priests residing outside the State. This order was strictly enforced for some time. The men of this caste are clean shaven and very well groomed and dressed, but when the dispute was eventually settled, the persons affected by the order had long dirt-matted beards, the hair of their heads was in

long stands and filthy in the extreme, and their clothes were beyond description for uncleanness.'7

'The higher castes of Bihar, such as Brahmans, Babhans (or Bhumihar Brahmans), Rajputs and Kayasths have no organization for the detection and punishment of breaches of caste rules. They have no governing body, and action must be by the members on their own initiative. If the offence is patent, they at once cease to have any intercourse with the offender. If there is any doubt about it, an informal meeting of the more influential members of the caste may be held and a common line of action determined upon. It rests entirely with the suspect to clear himself of the stigma. This he does by consulting a Pandit, who, if his sin can be atoned, gives a ruling on his case (*vyavastha*, or *panti*, or *patla*), stating the penances and ceremonies of expiation that have to be performed. Among the prescribed penances which are commonly undergone may be mentioned the following :—(1) Going on pilgrimage for an appointed period, (2) bathing in the Ganges and swallowing some of its sand, (3) living on alms for a prescribed time, (4) remaining dumb for an appointed time, (5) taking only one meal in 24 hours, (6) swallowing a mixture of the five products of the cow, viz. cowdung, cow's urine, milk, curd and *ghi*, and (7) fasting. The ceremonies of expiation are (1) sacrifice, (2) the worship of the gods, commonly of Satyanarayan, (3) making a gift of a cow, a heifer, cash and cloth to the family priest, (4) feeding Brahmans and making presents to them of cloth and cash, and (5) feeding fellow castemen. Other castes, which have no regular machinery for dealing with breaches of the caste law, have meetings for the discussion of such questions when they arise. A man who is aware of the offence informs his brethren, and they sit in conclave and decide on the steps to be taken. A special meeting may be held; or the matter may wait till some ceremony occurs, at which the members of the caste will naturally be present; or the suspect himself may lay his case before them in order to establish his innocence and regain the privileges of caste fellowship. Among such castes the control over individual members is naturally less complete than among castes which have a

constituted body of officials for the decision of matters affecting the community and for the punishment of unworthy members.'<sup>8</sup>

'Among the Nats of Champaran the authority of the tribal chief in caste matters is no less recognized, though they are Mussalmans. The Panchayat consists of the Pradhan or hereditary chief of the tribe and any other members (usually two or three) whom he may choose to appoint. He usually, and naturally, appoints residents of his village, in which he exercises undisputed authority. His authority, however, extends far beyond its confines or the immediate neighbourhood. It is exercised not only in Champaran, but also in Saran and Muzaffarpur, and even in the eastern districts of the United Provinces. He spends his time in visiting the various portions of his dominion, and is known and feared throughout it.

'The Pradhan takes cognizance of every kind of offence, criminal as well as social, which is brought to him for judgement, such as petty thefts, disputes about land, etc. The complainant and the accused each cut a small stick and give it to the Pradhan, who keeps the stick till the case is decided. The accused is then submitted to trial by ordeal, either by fire or by water. In the ordeal by fire, a red-hot piece of iron is placed on the victim's hand, his skin being slightly protected by seven leaves of the *pipal* tree. He has to hold it while another man runs a measured distance (seven yards and back); if the runner drops it, he is held to be guilty. Naturally a good deal depends on the speed and goodwill of the runner. The ordeal by water may be undergone in preference to that of fire. The accused is immersed in water up to the nose, and holds his nostrils. If he can hold his breath till a man has run the measured distance, he is acquitted and gets the weight of his stick in gold; the actual amount varies from Rs. 30 to Rs. 60. If he fails the test, he has to pay according to the same scale. This is regarded merely as a preliminary. The punishment follows. A fine is inflicted in the first instance, which is usually very heavy considering the means of the ordinary Nat. The fine goes into the pockets of the Pradhan. An alternative punishment is a cold bath; the victim is ordered to sit in the water of a tank or river for any period from 2 to 24 hours.

One unfortunate man, who was sentenced to this punishment, sat on a cold morning in a river for two or three hours, after which a compassionate Hindu Zamindar made him come out. The penalty he had to pay for disobeying his orders was out-casting for five years. The severity of other punishments will be apparent from the following instances. A man encroached on his neighbour's land and was fined Rs. 200. In another case a Nat was fined Rs. 100 for having illicit intercourse with a girl. In a third case a man, who took some maize from a field which he claimed as his own, was found guilty of theft and sentenced to remain in water for three hours. He could not bear the punishment, and was therefore fined Rs. 200.

'Obstinate refusal to pay a fine or undergo the punishment prescribed is always followed by outcasting—usually for two years or more. Five years is a usual sentence in such cases. The Pradhan's power is so absolute, and the respect paid to him so great, that the justice of his verdict is never questioned, and his punishments are carried out rigorously.'<sup>9</sup>

We thus realize how councils, whether belonging to a caste or a geographical region, have successfully carried out local administration in rural India. The principles which have guided them have been, conformity with established customs, or a common-sense view of what is just and fair. Disputants are found to accept the judgement of the panchayat or the headman without question. This is as much on account of the respect which they owe to the councils as for fear of severe punishment in case of refusal to obey such judgements.

Sen, while summing up his account of the local judicial system in Western India, says, 'The Panchayats were popularly called "Panch - Parameshwar",\* and the members of the Panch in many documents are addressed by the parties as their parents. The people of Maharastra would not have regarded

\*Panch means five, and Parameshwar, God ; so that Panch-Parameswar means the Council (of five), which is equivalent to God. The magical figure five has some special symbolic significances in India. The Universe is made up of five elements, earth, water, fire, air and ether ; five senses are at the disposal of man, the hand with which we work is made up of five fingers. So the magic figure five represents 'wholeness'.

the voice of the Panch as the voice of God, unless it fully deserved their confidence.'<sup>10</sup>

It was in this manner that the rural inhabitants of India tried to settle internal, local disputes successfully and, on the whole, desired to live in peace. It need not be imagined that all disputes were thus successfully settled to the satisfaction of the parties concerned. Ever since pre-Christian times, we also get condifications of laws, and instructions about judicial procedure. People did not cease to be litigious and the king also did not cease to function on that account.

When it came to kings in ancient India, we do not think they were more peace-loving than their counterparts in the rest of the world. The rules which were laid down for the guidance of kings were based upon the belief that a king became great in proportion to his power and possession; and this, we can easily imagine, does not lead to peace but to war, whenever war seems profitable. Thus, Kautilya in his book on statecraft lays down the following rule, 'A wise king shall observe that form of policy which, in his opinion, enables him to build forts, to construct buildings and commercial roads, to open new plantations and villages, to exploit mines and timber and elephant forests and at the same time to harass similar works of his enemy.'<sup>11</sup> 'When the advantages derivable from peace and war are of equal character, one should prefer peace; for disadvantages, such as the loss of power and wealth, sojourning, and sin, are ever attending upon war.'<sup>12</sup> But Kautilya also issues the following warning. 'Agreements of peace shall be made with equal and superior kings; and an inferior king shall be attacked. Whoever goes to wage war with a superior king will be reduced to the same condition as that of a foot-soldier opposing an elephant. Just as the collision of an unbaked mud-vessel with a similar vessel is destructive of both, so war with an equal king brings ruin in both.'<sup>13</sup>

In other words, conflict between kings, and litigation between disputants was as much part of the experience or even the historical tradition of India as in other parts of the world. And this was so in spite of the desire of common rural people in India to live in the exercise of their occupations in a peaceful manner.



### The Other Tradition

But besides this usual love for peace among toilers of the world, and love of heroism and of war or aggrandisement among kings, India also produced another tradition which it shall be our purpose to examine now. This was rooted in a deeper and more organized attitude which came from various forms of Indian or Hindu religious belief. Of course, the protestant forms of Hinduism associated with the names of Buddha and Jaina saints like Mahavira or Parsvanath are also covered by this tradition.

It has always been held by various schools of Hindu religion that the ultimate object of life is the attainment of salvation, designated by such terms as *moksha*, emancipation, or *nirvana*, extinction. This, in the opinion of some schools, is only possible through Divine Grace ; but it is also the opinion of many that even Grace comes through Endeavour. It is by ceaseless endeavour, which entails self-suffering for internal purification, *tapasya*, that a man can attain the highest state.

Devotees in India go on fast for a specified number of days, or through penances like sitting in summer with a ring of fire all round, or of exposing the body to intense cold and other forms of hardship so that the gods might be pleased. These mortifications are invoked, not as a self-drawn punishment for being a sinner, but in order to draw the attention of the gods, or sometimes in order to become internally purified by losing one's attachment to the body while going through these exercises.

It is curious that such an attitude has resulted in India in giving rise to special procedures for securing justice even in completely secular situations. It is quite an ancient tradition in India that a creditor who cannot realize his dues from a debtor may sit at the door of the latter's house and go on fast. Such an act immediately draws a crowd of villagers to the debtor's door, and the people, without entering into the merits of the claim, feel naturally inclined to sympathize with one who draws upon himself suffering for a cause which he believes to be just.

It must however be immediately pointed out that this traditional process, known as *dharna*, sometimes may become inverted, and degenerate into a means of coercion, plain and simple. Thus in one case, in the district of Bankura in West Bengal, a creditor entered his debtor's house in the morning and sat on the floor of the kitchen with his two legs stretched into the earthen stove, thus effectively preventing the women of the household from cooking their meals for the day. He remained hungry, while the debtor's family was also forced to go without food for the whole day.

T. D. Broughton who lived in the Maratha camp in 1809 has given an account of *dharna* as he observed it in his time.

'A few days ago a man called upon me.....He informed me that, as usual, his masters were in the utmost distress for money . . . He stated their claims upon the Muha Raj to amount to nearly seven lakhs of rupees ; and added, that if they could not get their accounts settled immediately, they meant to go next day and sit *dhurna* at his tents. This curious mode of enforcing a demand is the universal practice among the Mahrattas ; Seendhiya himself not being exempt from it. The man who sits the *dhurna*, goes to the house or tent of him whom he wishes to bring to terms ; and remains there till the affair is settled ; during which time the one under restraint is confined to his apartment, and not suffered to communicate with any persons but those whom the other may approve of. The laws by which the *dhurna* is regulated are as well defined and understood as those of any other custom whatever. When it is meant to be very strict, the claimant carries a number of his followers, who surround the tent, sometimes even the bed of his adversary, and deprive him altogether of food ; in which case, however, etiquette prescribes the same abstinence to himself ; the strongest stomach of course carries the day. A custom of this kind was once so prevalent in the province and city of Benares, that Brahmans were trained to remain a long time without food. They were sent to the door of some rich individual ; where they made a vow to remain without eating, till they should obtain a certain sum of money. To preserve the life of a Brahman is so absolutely a duty, that money was

generally paid ; but never till a good struggle had taken place to ascertain whether the man was staunch or not ; for money is the life and soul of all Hindoos. In this camp there are many Brahmans, who hire themselves out to sit *dhurnā* for those, who do not like to expose themselves to so great an inconvenience.'<sup>14</sup>

The editor of the above book further adds the following note :

'Under the Indian Penal Code the practice of *dhurna* is an offence punishable "with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to one year, with fine, or with both". Marco Polo<sup>15</sup> describes a variety of the practice in Southern India as follows :—

'If a debtor shall have been several times asked by his creditor for payment, and shall have put him off from day to day with promises, then if the creditor can once meet the debtor and succeed in drawing a circle round him, the latter must not pass out of the circle until he shall have satisfied the claim or given security for its discharge. If he in any other case presume to pass the circle, he is punished with death as a transgressor against right and justice. And the said Masser Marco, when in this kingdom (Province of Maabar) on his return home, did himself witness a case of this. It was the king, who owed a foreign merchant a certain sum of money, and though the claim had often been presented, he always put it off with promises. Now one day when the king was riding through the city, the merchant found his opportunity, and drew a circle round both king and horse. The king, on seeing this, halted, and would ride no further ; nor did he stir from the spot until the merchant was satisfied. And when the bystanders saw this they marvelled greatly, saying that the king was a most just king indeed, having thus submitted to justice.'<sup>16</sup>

### Peaceful Resistance against Religious Intolerance

Such crude forms of moral coercion, against which the other party had often no means of protection, were however not the only means, other than those of open violence or litigation, to which recourse was taken for the settlement of disputes.

Bengal was ruled by Muslim kings in the 15th century, and it was then that the great saint and reformer Chaitanya (1485-1533) was born. The Vaishnava cult which Chaitanya propagated had, as one of its important items of worship, the chanting of the name of God with the music of drums and cymbals, this being known as *kirtan*. When this movement became popular among the common folk of the town of Nadia, where Chaitanya lived, the Muslim inhabitants of the town became infuriated and went in a deputation to the Kazi or Muslim judge and magistrate. So the Kazi one night entered a home where music was being conducted with the accompaniment of drums. He broke the drums, and threatened the assembled people by saying, 'So long no one has dared to observe Hinduism in this manner. If you persist, I will bring heavy punishment upon you and take away your caste,' which implied that they would be forcibly made to eat prohibited meat and then converted to Islam. The people became frightened. But when Chaitanya heard the news on the following day, he immediately decided not only to have the *kirtan* in private homes, but to carry a procession with music through the streets to the Kazi's own residence. So, three separate parties consisting of common folk were formed, while the comparatively rich went in trepidation to the Kazi and said that they had nothing to do with the movement for which the rash young man named Chaitanya alone was responsible. Thus, at night, with lighted torches in hand, the common folk went singing aloud the name of God to the palace where the Magistrate lived. The latter, with his retinue, became frightened and immediately took shelter indoors.

When Chaitanya reached the palace, he saw some members of the crowd despoiling the flower garden of the Kazi. He asked them not to do so, but behave like gentlemen, and sent word to the Magistrate that he had come as a guest to his house. The Kazi met him, when a demand or prayer for the right of freedom of worship was placed before him. This was, of course, quickly granted.

In the life of Chaitanya, we find another occasion when during a journey from Orissa to Bengal a boat-man entreated

him not to utter the Hindu name of God publicly as he was now passing into the territory of a Muslim king. Instead of desisting, it is said that Chaitanya began to sing aloud the name of Hari. Muslim officers rushed to the spot, but fortunately nothing unpleasant happened.

A peaceful resistance of this kind could, however, have quite easily led to extremely unfortunate circumstances. Haridas, who was a contemporary of Chaitanya, and one of his closest associates, was a Muslim by birth. But he had already adopted Hindu religious practices voluntarily. When complaints reached the Muslim Magistrate, Haridas was summoned and ordered to give up his new-fangled practices. Haridas quietly refused, when it was decided that he should be flogged publicly in all the eighteen markets of the town. The orders were that he should be flogged to death, when his corpse was to be buried with due Islamic ceremonies. Haridas was not perturbed, and took all the flogging with miraculous patience while his lips went on uttering the Hindu names of God. When the servants of the Magistrate had done their worst even in the last market place, they became frightened, for the Kazi would punish them for having failed to take the saint's life. Haridas smiled and said to them, 'If my life has become such a burden to you, then let me die without delay'. And he sat in yogic meditation while, those who watched, found that gradually all signs of breath left his body. But when they tried to lift the body for the grave, they found it had miraculously become so heavy that it could not be moved at all.<sup>17</sup> This miracle changed the heart of the servants, as well as of the Magistrate and Haridas was left free to pursue his devotions in any manner he liked. Haridas came back from his yogic trance soon after, and his body also became normal again.

Stories and traditions of this kind are not rare in India, as they are also not rare in other parts of the world. But elsewhere saints who stood up for religious freedom were not generally accorded the same amount of veneration and freedom in their lifetime as under Hindu civilization.

India has paid a deeper homage to philosophers and saints than to kings and warriors. Although there have been

periods when the Kshatriya, or Warrior, tradition has been held in higher repute, yet, on the whole, it has been the Brahman who has received the unstinted adoration of the multitude for ages past in Indian history. This is comparable to what we find in China, where the poet and the philosopher were paid greater respect, while the soldier was considered to stand much lower in social estimation.

The traditional occupation of the Brahman has been defined in the scriptures as priestcraft, study of the sacred scriptures and their dissemination. It was also held that these men of spirituality and knowledge were to live lives of voluntary poverty. When such traditions became obscure, or there was degeneration in practice, eminent thinkers tried once more to re-establish the old traditions by means of example and precept.

Thus Buddha, who raised the banner of revolt against the hardened formalism of Brahmanical tradition in the 6th century B.C. said, 'A man does not become a Brahmana by his platted hair, by his family, or birth; in whom there is truth and righteousness, he is blessed, he is a Brahmana.

'I do not call a man a Brahmana because of his origin or of his mother. He is indeed arrogant, and he is wealthy, but the poor who is free from all attachments, him I call indeed a Brahmana.

'Him I call indeed a Brahmana who is tolerant with the intolerant, mild with fault-finders, and free from passion among the passionate.

'Him I call indeed a Brahmana from whom anger and hatred, pride and envy have dropt like a mustard seed from the point of a needle.'<sup>18</sup>

Buddha was so explicit in regard to how to end disputes and conflicts that he said in conformity with the ancient tradition:

'He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me",—in those who harbour such thoughts hatred will never cease.

"He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me",--in those who do not harbour such thoughts hatred will cease.

'For hatred does not cease by hatred at any time : hatred ceases by love ; this is the old rule.'<sup>19</sup>

The ancient tradition in which people answered hatred by love, anger by calmness, or, in other words, invited self-suffering instead of inflicting suffering and punishment upon others for the vindication of a just cause, may easily be imagined to have been limited to a small proportion of the population in contrast with the rest who evidently pursued the usual ways of life. It is however noteworthy that great respect was paid to such men and women ; and those who tried to follow the paths of *tapasya* even in the midst of ordinary life were not considered to be 'idealistic', in the sense of being a little quixotic or foolish, but were looked upon as doing the right thing.

The Brahmanical tradition of *tapasya* or self-suffering for truth was, we are afraid, associated with the pursuit of a spiritual life alone, in which spirituality was exclusively associated with other-worldliness, while the daily life of the general run of mankind was left alone to be ruled by common rules which are in vogue everywhere. An illustration can be drawn from the Jaina sects in India. The Jainas have stood for *ahimsa* or non-injury to a much more exaggerated extent than any other sect in India. Jaina devotees cover their mouth with a pad of cloth, or strain every ounce of water which they drink for fear some insect or living being might be unconsciously injured by them. Yet Jainism has, in the past, come to a kind of compromise with the State and with kings, the very basis of whose existence is formed by the organization of armed force. Asoka, the great Buddhist emperor of India, abjured war ; but this did not lead him to the logically necessary step of giving up the fruits of conquests which had already been secured by dint of arms. His non-violence remained confined, more or less, to certain personal spheres of life.

Not that this progress, or incorporation of the principle of non-injury was a small thing in itself ; but the point is that

in India where sect after sect tried to develop the tradition of peace, they generally succeeded in watering only a limited number of the fields of life by its means.

### Restatement of the Tradition by Gandhi

It was in the first decade of the present century that the above tradition found a new expression in the field of inter-communal relations in South Africa under the leadership of M. K. Gandhi. Tolstoy considered the non-violent resistance of the Indian community in South Africa to be an experiment of the highest significance for the whole world.

Gandhi personally came from a deeply religious Vaishnava family. In his childhood days, he was deeply exercised over the treatment which he found meted out to the so-called untouchables. The stories of mythical saints like Harishchandra, Dhruva or Prahlad also moved him deeply, as all of them had shown exemplary adherence to truth, and had also suffered in consequence. His desire was to emulate them when he grew up to manhood. When Gandhi went as a student to England, he became acquainted with the Christian tradition, and the elements of humanitarianism and devotion to truth, which were already present in him, became considerably reinforced by his Western association.

The story of how he gradually developed the technique of non-violence or satyagraha in order to meet the challenge of racial discrimination need not be retold, for it is very well represented in his autobiography, entitled *My Experiments with Truth* and in his *Satyagraha in South Africa*. The point is that Gandhi was the first man in modern India to adapt a technique considered valid in religious life to the circumstances of what is considered to be the secular sphere of our life. It is therefore necessary to describe the technique itself, and also study some of its actual applications, before we proceed to an examination of how he desired to employ it in the larger sphere of international relations.

The term *satyagraha* comes from two Sanskrit words denoting 'truth' and 'eagerness' or 'insistence'. Gandhi went forward to explain that a *satyagrahi*, i.e. one who practised



satyagraha, was a man who tried to vindicate his particular view of truth by self-suffering instead of inflicting suffering upon others. Every man had the right to hold his own view of truth, and there was no point in trying to impose one view of truth upon an unwilling person by means of punishment or violence.

A recognition of the right of holding different views of truth did not however mean passive acquiescence in their continued existence. An insistence upon the plurality of truth was not to lead a person or group into a neutral attitude ; it was bound to lead him to oppose what he held to be wrong by non-violently non-co-operating with it. Untruth and injustice continued to exist because of the active or passive acquiescence of men whether it sprang from ignorance, inertia, fear or temptation. The duty of one who tried to order life in terms of truth thus clearly lay in opposing wrongs by means of *tapasya* or self-suffering.

When a man was ready to pay this price for his particular view of truth, Gandhi held, even if he were wrong in the beginning, his self-suffering would chasten him and help him in recognizing any truth which lay on the other side. Gandhi was of opinion that the opposition of satyagraha never led to the defeat of one view by another, but to the recognition in the end of a common view to which both the contending parties could truthfully subscribe.

This was clearly based upon the ancient Indian philosophical view that truth can be most closely approximated only when we try to discover the unopposed within apparent opposites, and that truth comes to one who performs *tapasya* for its sake. As the celebrated contemporary philosopher, Gopinath Kaviraj, once put it, in a musical instrument known as the *sitar* in India; the strings are set to different keys, yet when music is produced, the keys sound harmoniously and melt into one whole. The task of the musician is to find the notes which are in harmony with one another. It is even so in the matter of different views of truth by which men guide their lives in the day-to-day world. If we constantly endeavour to discover that which is harmonious within apparently

separate, and even opposed, views, we come as near to truth as life permits.

The purpose of this theoretical digression is to show that the Gandhian method is a continuation of one of the comparatively important traditions produced by Indian civilization. Gandhi's genius lay, firstly, in extending its application from exclusively religious to secular spheres of life, and, secondly, in converting satyagraha from a private and personal instrument into a large-scale collective enterprise for the people of India.

Gandhi's principle object was to find a substitute for war. With all its shortcomings war is undoubtedly a most effective means of bringing about change. Unfortunately, the end actually achieved is not commensurate with the cost involved. Gandhi's further criticism of war was that it led to a pride among the conquerors which prevented them from recognizing any element of truth or justice which might lie on the other side. Parliaments or international courts are not always effective in preventing war when serious interests become involved in a dispute. So Gandhi tried to find a substitute of direct action which would promise better results, and at less human cost, than in the case of war.

From the theoretical point of view, there is an interesting element in Gandhi's opinion about non-violent resistance. We have seen already how the Buddha considered the way of peace to be the way of the Brahman. Gandhi, on the other hand, held that the tradition of peace, or of love and self-suffering for its sake, was more a characteristic of women than of men. It is quite possible that, in the last analysis, this opinion of Gandhi came from the deep influence which his mother exercised over him in his boyhood days, or it may also have come from some other experiences of early youth.<sup>20</sup> But whatever the origin may be, Gandhi was firmly of opinion that human civilization cannot be rescued from its march towards self-destruction unless some elements are introduced into it, of which he held womankind to be the special representatives.

### **Applications of Satyagraha**

In India, ever since Gandhi's admission into politics in 1919 to the end of his days in 1948, there have been numerous

applications of satyagraha in the sphere of inter-communal relations, or of economic, social and political conflict. Some of these were directly under his leadership, while quite a few of the minor or local ones, were under his distant guidance, or had sprung up independently of his knowledge, but obviously under the inspiration of the larger movements for which he was responsible.

In Vaikam in 1924 there was a movement for the establishment of certain simple civic rights denied to 'untouchable' castes. In Amritsar, about the same time, there was a struggle for extending public control over the religious establishments of the Sikhs. In Bardoli, peasants struggled for a reduction of rent in 1928 ; the Union Board was boycotted in Midnapore in 1921 ; there was a movement against enhanced water rates in Burdwan after 1930. Besides about forty or more of local satyagrahas on various issues, there were the larger, nation-wide political satyagrahas of 1921, 1930 and 1932, and 1942.

No detailed, critical investigation has yet been made of these operations from the historical or sociological point of view. Yet such a study seems to be very desirable.

In some of the above cases, like the struggle for establishment of common civic rights on behalf of 'untouchables', the morality of the cause was, more or less, clearly established in the public mind. Where economic wrongs were involved, the issues were not always equally clear ; and public opinion might be justifiably divided. In quite a few of the campaigns, although no actual violence was done to opponents, satyagrahis failed to retain the desire to reform their opponents and became embittered. If and when violence did break out, Gandhi took special means in order to curb hatred, while he tried to guide satyagraha so that its purpose was not defeated. It would evidently be of value if the actual operation of these movements is subjected to detailed analysis. One has to discover from past experiments what are the circumstances under which satyagraha works best, and how and why it fails where it has done so in the past.

### Vaikam Satyagraha

Vaikam is a small town in South India situated at 9° 46'N and 76° 24'E. It was ruled by Hindu princes up to 1947. There is a celebrated Hindu temple here; and untouchable castes were not only refused admission into the temple in 1924, but some among them were not even allowed to pass by public roads beside which Brahmans lived.

In the first quarter of 1924, a satyagraha movement was launched here for opening the roads 'to the so-called untouchables as they were to all other Hindus and even non-Hindus'. Some violence was done by Brahmans to those who notified their intention and tried to march in peaceful procession in defiance of established custom. The Travancore Government anticipated breach of peace and issued a prohibitory order. Civil resisters defied the order and courted imprisonment. The struggle continued for two years until finally the right of free use of the road was duly established. Some years afterwards, the right of temple-entry was officially recognized by the State Government.

Gandhi was not in official leadership of the campaign. Yet he helped civil resisters by constant guidance and by advertising their cause. It is interesting to study some of the instructions which he issued from time to time, for they throw light upon the fundamentals of the new technique as it developed under his leadership.

With regard to the question whether sympathisers of the 'untouchables' could join the campaign if they happened to belong to religions other than Hinduism, Gandhi said, 'Untouchability is the sin of the Hindus. They must suffer for it, they must purify themselves, they must pay the debt they owe to suppressed brothers and sisters. Theirs is the shame and theirs must be the glory when they have purified themselves of the black sin.'<sup>2 1</sup>

He reminded civil resisters that their task required great patience. 'In a reform that the Vykom struggle seeks to achieve, the Satyagrahi seeks to convert his opponent by sheer force of character and suffering. The purer he is and the more he suffers, the quicker the progress. He must therefore

resign himself to be excommunicated, debarred from the family privileges and deprived of his share in the family property. He must not only bear such hardships cheerfully but he must actively love his persecutors. The latter honestly believe that the reformer is doing something sinful and therefore resort to the only means they know to be effective to wean him from his supposed error. The Satyagrahi on the other hand does not seek to carry out his reform by a system of punishments but by penance, self-purification and suffering. Any resentment of the persecution, therefore, would be an interruption of the course of discipline he has imposed upon himself.'<sup>2 2</sup>

'I do not wonder', he wrote on August 14, 1924 in the *Young India*, 'that the hearts of the orthodox have not yet been touched by the sufferings of the Satyagrahis. They have not suffered long enough yet nor intensely enough. Even suffering cannot be manufactured. They must take whatever God may have in store for them. If he wants them to have to linger away in suffering, they must submit to it cheerfully. They dare not shirk the severest trial nor may they dare stage-play suffering.' In pointing out the continuity of satyagraha with the ancient Hindu tradition, Gandhi wrote in course of the same article, 'To the orthodox Hindus I need not point out the sovereign efficacy of *tapasya*. And Satyagraha is nothing but *tapasya* for Truth.'

In defying the prohibitory order of the Government, many civil resisters courted jail. The attitude of the Government, however, was sympathetic, but they had to keep the peace of the land as they saw it. In this connection, Gandhi had to write explicitly to satyagrahis as to what their attitude should be to the official world. 'The Travancore authorities, whilst they still remain unbending regarding the prohibition order, are carrying out their purpose in a courteous manner. The public already know how quickly the authorities tried to check violence against Satyagrahis. The treatment in the gaols too is in keeping with their conduct in the open...

'Surprise has been expressed over the advice I have tendered to the Satyagrahis that whilst Satyagraha continues,

the organisers should leave no stone unturned by way of petitions, public meetings, deputations etc., in order to engage the support of the state and public opinion on their side. The critics argue that I am partial to the state authorities because they represent Indian rule, whereas I am hostile to the British authorities because they represent an alien rule. For me every ruler is alien that defies public opinion ....

'In Travancore the Satyagrahis are not attacking a whole system. They are not attacking it at any point at all. They are fighting sacerdotal prejudice. The Travancore state comes in by a side door as it were. Satyagrahis would therefore be deviating from their path if they did not try to court junction with the authorities and cultivate public support by means of deputations, meetings etc. Direct action does not always preclude other consistent methods. Nor is petitioning etc. in every case a sign of weakness on the part of the Satyagrahi. Indeed he is no Satyagrahi who is not humble.'<sup>2 3</sup>

In course of satyagraha, the civil resister might reach a point when he has to break an impasse, and devise some new way of advance. In Gandhi's own case he resorted to self-imposed fasts on several occasions in his lifetime. This was an extension of the ancient practice of *dharna*, with the reservation that no supernatural intervention was called for, nor was the fast an instrument of coercion against the opponent. Its sole purpose was to touch the heart of a *sympathiser*, and induce him to be more energetic in the vindication of a cause which he held to be right.<sup>2 4</sup>

In course of the Vaikam struggle, he issued an instruction on the point which is reproduced below. 'Fasting in satyagraha has well-defined limits. You cannot fast against a tyrant, for it will be a species of violence done to him. You invite penalty from him for disobedience of his orders but you cannot inflict on yourselves penalties when he refuses to punish and renders it impossible for you to disobey his orders so as to compel infliction of penalty. Fasting can only be resorted to against a lover, not to extort rights but to reform him as when a son fasts for a father who drinks .....

'The words "tyrant" and "lover" have a general application. The one who does an injustice is styled "tyrant". The

one who is in sympathy with you is the "lover". In my opinion, in the Vaikom movement opponents of the reform are the "tyrant". "The State may or may not be that. In this connection I have considered the State as merely the police striving to keep the peace. In no case is the State or the opponents in the position of "lover". The supporters of Vaikom Satyagrahis enjoy that status. There are two conditions attached to a Satyagrahi fast. It should be against the lover and for his reform, not for extorting rights from him..... I can fast against my father to cure him of a vice, but I may not in order to get from him an inheritance. The beggars of India who sometimes fast against those who do not satisfy them are no more Satyagrahis than children who fast against a parent for a fine dress .... If the Vaikom Satyagrahis fast because the authorities will not arrest them, it will be, I must say in all humility, the beggar's fast described above.'<sup>2 5</sup>

It is noteworthy that Gandhi was thus trying to extend to the public sphere what had so long been confined to private spheres of life. Indeed he once said, 'Public Satyagraha is an extension of private or domestic Satyagraha. Every instance of public Satyagraha should be tested by imagining a parallel domestic case. Thus suppose in my family I wish to remove the curse of untouchability. Suppose further that my parents oppose the view, that I have the fire of the conviction of Prahlad, that my father threatens penalties, calls in even the assistance of the state to punish me. What should I do? May I invite my friends to suffer with me the penalties my father has devised for me? Or is it not upto me, meekly to bear all the penalties my father inflicts on me and absolutely rely on the law of suffering and love to melt his heart and open his eyes to the evil of untouchability? It is open to me to bring in the assistance of learned men, the friends of the family, to explain to my father what he may not understand from me his child. But I may allow no one to share with me the privilege and the duty of suffering. What is true of this supposed case of domestic Satyagraha is equally true and no less of the case we have imagined of public Satyagraha'.<sup>2 6 \*</sup>

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\*This was written with reference to the proposal of enlisting support from sympathisers who did not belong to the Hindu persuasion.

### The Salt Satyagraha of 1930

In the year 1930, the Indian National Congress revised its objective and stated that henceforth the attainment of independence was to be its goal. It further bestowed the supreme responsibility of leading the nation in its non-violent campaign upon Mahatma Gandhi.

When Gandhi took over charge, his first step was to make an offer of negotiation with the British Viceroy of India, provided he showed earnestness by initiating some very necessary economic and political reforms. In an article published in the *Young India* of 30 January 1930, he wrote :

‘Let him and the British cabinet initiate the following reforms :

1. Total prohibition,
2. Reduction of the ratio to 1s. 4d.,
3. Reduction of the land revenue to at least 50% and making it subject to legislative control,
4. Abolition of the salt tax,
5. Reduction of the military expenditure to at least 50% to begin with,
6. Reduction of the salaries of the higher grade service to one half or less so as to suit the reduced revenue,
7. Protective tariff on foreign cloth,
8. Discharge of all political prisoners save those condemned for murder or the attempt thereof by the ordinary judicial tribunal, withdrawal of all political prosecutions, abrogation of Section 124A, the Regulation of 1818 and the like, and permission of all the Indian exiles to return,
9. Abolition of the C.I.D. or its popular control,
10. Issue of licenses to use firearms for self-defence subject to popular control.

‘This’, Gandhi proceeded to explain, ‘is by no means an exhaustive list of pressing needs. But let the Viceroy satisfy these very simple but vital needs of India. He will then hear



no talk of civil disobedience, and the Congress will heartily participate in any conference where there is perfect freedom of expression and demand.'<sup>27</sup>

As response from the British authorities was not encouraging, it was decided that satyagraha should be initiated with a civil breach of the Salt Law by Mahatma Gandhi with such companions as he wished to choose. On the eve of embarking upon the movement, Gandhi sent a personal letter to the Viceroy in which he addressed the latter as 'Dear Friend'. He also took particular care to send it by the hand of a young English pacifist who happened to be present in India at the time. The point is that the appeal was to a 'person' who belonged to the opposite camp to rise above narrownesses which came from office, and recognize the essential justice of the demand being made by the Congress on behalf of the Indian nation.

The letter stated in the opening paragraphs, 'Before embarking on Civil Disobedience and taking the risk I have dreaded to take all these years, I would fain approach you and find a way out.

'My personal faith is absolutely clear. I cannot intentionally hurt anything that lives, much less fellow human beings, even though they may do the greatest wrong to me and mine. Whilst, therefore, I hold the British rule to be a curse, I do not intend to harm a single Englishman or any legitimate interest he may have in India.'

The reply which came from the Viceroy's Private Secretary was to the following effect, 'His Excellency the Viceroy desires me to acknowledge your letter of the 2nd March. He regrets to learn that you contemplate a course of action which is clearly bound to involve violation of the law and danger to the public peace.' Commenting upon this, Gandhi wrote a short while later, 'On bended knees, I asked for bread and received a stone instead. The English Nation responds only to force, and I am not surprised by the Viceroyal reply. The only public peace the Nation knows is the peace of the public prison. India is a vast prison house. I

repudiate the Law and regard it as my sacred duty to break the mournful monotony of compulsory peace that is choking the heart of the Nation for want of free vent.'<sup>28</sup>

So, on 12 March 1930, Gandhi started on a trek from Ahmedabad towards Dandi which is a small village on the seashore two hundred miles away. The place was reached on the 5th of April, and the formal civil breach of the Salt Law was initiated on the following morning.

In course of his march on foot for three weeks, Gandhi addressed numerous meetings in which thousands upon thousands of men, women and children gathered to listen to him; while many newspapers gave wide publicity to his speeches all over the country. Soon after the Salt Law had been formally broken by Gandhi in Gujarat, permission was given to volunteers in other parts of India to do so, provided they signed certain pledges and placed themselves unreservedly under the discipline of non-violence and of the local satyagraha committees.

A portion of the instruction issued for the guidance of volunteers is reproduced below.

'A civil resister, whilst he will strain every nerve to compass the end of the existing rule, will do no intentional injury in thought, word or deed to the person of a single Englishman...

1. A Satyagrahi, i.e., a civil resister will harbour no anger.

2. He will suffer the anger of the opponent.

3. In so doing he will put up with assaults from the opponent, never retaliate; but he will not submit, out of fear of punishment or the like, to any order given in anger.

4. When any person in authority seeks to arrest a civil resister, he will voluntarily submit to the arrest, and he will not resist the attachment or removal of his own property, if any, when it is sought to be confiscated by authorities.

5. If a civil resister has any property in his possession as a trustee, he will refuse to surrender it, even though in defending it he might lose his life. He will, however, never retaliate.

6. Non-retaliation includes swearing and cursing.

7. Therefore a civil resister will never insult his opponent, and therefore also not take part in many of the newly coined cries which are contrary to the spirit of *ahimsa*.

8. A civil resister will not salute the Union Jack, nor will he insult it or officials, English or Indian.

9. In the course of the struggle if any one insults an official or commits an assault upon him, a civil resister will protect such official or officials from the insult or attack even at the risk of his life.<sup>29</sup>

Within a few weeks' time, jails all over the country were filled to overflowing. Consequently, arrests slowed down and civil resisters and their sympathisers now began to be beaten severely with wooden sticks. In reply to a question in the Legislative Assembly, the Government admitted that firing had been resorted to on twenty-three occasions when 109 men lost their lives and about 420 were wounded.<sup>30</sup> The figure arrived at by non-official enquiries was considerably higher. Thus, in Peshawar, the official figure for the dead on 23 April 1930, was 30 and wounded 33, while the *Report of the Peshawar Enquiry Committee*, appointed by the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress, and presided over by V. J. Patel, Barrister-at-Law and ex-President of the Legislative Assembly, stated that 'the number of persons actually proved to have been killed is 125 but we have no doubt that a much larger number must have been killed and a still larger number wounded. Proof in respect of this larger number of killed and wounded it is impossible to secure in the conditions now obtaining in the province. Such proof as had been collected by the Congress Committee after the 29th April was seized by the military on the 4th May since when further inquiries have become impossible owing to the continued presence of the military in the city.'<sup>31</sup>

It is interesting to observe how civil resisters behaved under different degrees of provocation, and what manner of response was shown by those who were enlisted as volunteers.

In one case in Bengal, the illicit manufacture of salt was being carried on in a place called Contai in the Midnapur District. After an initial phase of arrest, the police resorted to beating civil resisters when they came in procession to the place where salt was to be manufactured. Every morning five volunteers used to offer satyagraha in this manner, and when they were wounded and fainted, they were conveyed on stretchers to a camp hospital set up by the Congress, to take up their posts once more on recovery.

Large crowds of men and women used to collect every morning in order to witness the spectacle ; but they remained more or less passive, though they professed sympathy with the sufferers. Under these circumstances, a kind of stalemate seemed to have been arrived at. So, one morning, the satyagrahis resorted to a new tactic. Instead of sending fresh volunteers, a batch of those who had been wounded on the previous day was asked to march up to the police barricade. The whole body and even the face of one had become so swollen that his eyelids were closed, and he had to be guided by his comrades as he walked along. This sight seemed to stir the watching crowd. A few of the women suddenly stepped forward and barred the way ; they would not allow the wounded man to be killed. Moreover, they and the men who had so long stood by volunteered themselves for manufacturing salt in defiance of prohibitory orders. Thus, the satyagraha campaign which had so long remained confined to volunteers, became converted into a mass movement through the courage of a small band of men who staked their lives for its sake.

Similar tales of heroism came from many parts of India, some of the bravest acts being due to the people of the North-West Frontier Province who live in tribes, and who are accustomed to fight against one another, as well as against the British Government, by means of firearms. They showed an exemplary measure of non-violent discipline even under the gravest provocation.

Correspondents of English newspapers watched the proceedings of the satyagraha campaign in many places, and bore testimony to the heroism and restraint of those who partici-

pated in the campaign. H. N. Brailsford wrote a long and detailed article based on personal observation in the *Manchester Guardian* of 12 January 1931, which is reproduced in the official *History of the Congress*.<sup>32</sup> Another English correspondent, representing *The Daily Herald* of London wrote, 'I watched the events from an observation-post of one of the rocky hills which ring in Wadala. It was humiliating for an Englishman to stand among the ardent, friendly, but deeply moved crowd of volunteers and sympathisers and watch the representatives of the country's administration, engaged in this ludicrous, embarrassing business.' Another, on behalf of the *New Freeman*, wrote, 'In eighteen years of reporting in twenty-two countries, during which I have witnessed innumerable civil disturbances, riots, street fights and rebellions, I have never witnessed such harrowing scenes as at Dharsana. Sometimes the scenes were so painful that I had to turn away momentarily. One surprising feature was the discipline of the volunteers. It seemed they were thoroughly imbued with Gandhi's non-violence creed.'<sup>33</sup>

Although volunteers were thus able to keep themselves restrained, the cruel behaviour of the government officers enraged the people who watched the proceedings; so that, in some areas, the latter were subjected to social boycott. When such a thing happened in Gujarat where Gandhi was present in person, he at once issued the following instruction, 'People have preserved peace but there are anger and malice and, therefore, violence in their intense social boycott. They censure and harass Government officials in small matters. They will not succeed in this manner . . . . People of Kaira District should take a warning and enforce boycott within limits. I have indicated, for instance, boycott of village officers should be with regard to their office only. Their order should not be obeyed but their food supplies should not be stopped. They should not be ejected from their houses. If we are not capable of doing this we should give up the boycott.'<sup>34</sup>

The comparatively high degree of restraint among volunteers began to have its effect upon the police force and soldiers

of India who were employed to suppress civil disobedience. A regiment of Garhwali soldiers refused to open fire on an unarmed crowd, and were consequently sentenced to long terms of imprisonment.

The effect on the English people themselves is also worth studying in this connection. There seemed to be little response from official quarters; but many an individual Englishman was touched by the silent heroism of the satyagrahis, and they worked hard in trying to bring about a settlement between the contending parties. The British Government in India fast lost public sympathy, and evidently realized that it was becoming progressively estranged from those whom it pretended to represent. So a cessation of hostilities was called for in January 1931, when an agreement was signed between the Government of India and the Indian National Congress, and prisoners released as a first step towards further negotiation for peace.

### Organization of Non-violence

A question of some importance can now be raised in connection with situations described above. How long can common people remain restrained in the face of repression? What are the chances of their striking back, or, in the alternative, of their demoralization and collapse after an initial exercise of non-violent resistance?

The experience of India during the leadership of Gandhi has been, on the whole, of a mixed kind. If the front rank in a campaign remain firm, yet restrained, their example seems to galvanize the crowd who stand behind into almost the same condition. But, in case such leadership is withdrawn, or if there are no such leaders, the same crowd may give way to weakness in resistance or fear and collapse, or they may eventually take recourse to violence.

During the Quit-India Movement of 1942, a 'National Government' was set up in the district of Midnapur in West Bengal in total defiance of the ruling authority. Its 'army' consisted of hundreds of unarmed men and women in the villages, who marched in peaceful procession in order to take possession of Police Stations, which were symbols and the

seat of authority of the ruling power. Armed constables opened fire upon such processions when a number of people were killed or wounded ; and then the constables used to leave. When the crowd took possession of the empty police stations, they sometimes came across a few rifles left in the armoury. Such arms as thus came into their possession were broken or thrown into neighbouring tanks ; discipline would not allow satyagrahis to use them to their own advantage.

In November 1945 and February 1946, the British Government banned entry into a portion of the city of Calcutta entitled Dharamtala, where processionists wanted to converge for a meeting in order to express sympathy and demand justice on behalf of the rebellious naval ratings of Bombay. At one point in the street, the Police stood with arms across the road, while the crowd advanced peacefully with flags in hand. The satyagrahis first squatted on the ground near the barricade, and then one small batch from among them stood up and advanced towards the police line.

Fire was immediately opened, when a few were killed and many wounded. In the melee, one European sergeant suddenly discovered that he had penetrated into the heart of the crowd, while there were no more unspent bullets in his revolver. In this situation, one of the civil resisters who had himself been wounded in the thigh by a bullet, discovered his plight, tried to pacify the angry crowd, and tossed the policeman over to the other side of the line where his comrades stood in formation.

It was Gandhi's firm opinion that even those who had never been under the formal discipline of non-violence can rise to great heights of courage in moments of crisis. The question still remains, whether such a mood of non-violence can survive successive crises. After the withdrawal of civil disobedience in 1931, its renewal in 1932, and virtual defeat in 1933, there were numerous expressions of small-scale violence in various parts of the country. The revolutionary parties of India who were outside the Congress, and who had never subscribed to the discipline of non-violence, were goaded into violence by the repressive measures resorted to by the Government. Although the common people did not actively participate in such

movements and remained restrained, yet their non-violence, or even that of the satyagrahis was not enough to stem the rising tide of violent rebellion when their own non-violent movement failed. Their non-violence was thus weak in character.

Evidences of this weakness were forthcoming from among Congressmen, for even within the organization, the majority had never subscribed to Gandhi's entire philosophy of non-violence. In July 1940, an important section of Congressmen advocated India's entry into the war on behalf of the democratic powers. In a speech delivered by the President, it was said, 'we know that arms and ammunitions have not been able to save the freedom of France, Holland, Belgium and Norway, but we also know that human nature even after realising the futility of armed resistance is not prepared to give up force. We had not the courage to declare that we shall organize a State in this country without an armed force. If we did it would be wrong on our part. Mahatma Gandhi has to give a message of non-violence to the world and, therefore, it is his duty to propagate it but we have to consider our position as the representatives of the Indian Nation meeting in the Indian National Congress. The Indian National Congress is a political organization pledged to win the political independence of the country. It is not an institution for organizing world peace.'<sup>35</sup>

People therefore asked Gandhi why he did not try to build up an organization with only those who subscribed to his views in a complete manner. In answer, he wrote in April 1942, 'I adhere to the opinion that I did well to present to the Congress non-violence as an expedient. I could not have done otherwise, if I was to introduce it into politics. In South Africa too I introduced it as an expedient. It was successful there because resisters were a small number in a compact area and therefore easily controlled. Here we had numberless persons scattered over a huge country. The result was that they could not be easily controlled or trained. And yet it is a marvel the way they have responded. They might have responded much better and shown far better results. But I have no sense of disappointment in me over the results obtained.



If I had started with men who accepted non-violence as a creed, I might have ended with myself. Imperfect as I am, I started with imperfect men and women and sailed on an uncharted ocean. Thank God, that though the boat has not reached its haven, it has proved fairly storm-proof.

'God has blessed me with the mission to place non-violence before the nation for adoption. For better or for worse, the Congress has adopted it, and for the last nineteen years the Congress, admittedly the most popular and powerful organization, has consistently and up to the best of its ability tried to act up to it.

'I hope the learned critic does not wish to suggest that as the Congress did not accept my position, I should have dissociated myself entirely from the Congress and refused to guide it. My association enables the Congress to pursue the technique of corporate non-violent action.

'I would not serve the cause of non-violence, if I deserted my best co-workers because they could not follow me in an extended application of non-violence. I therefore remain with them in the faith that their departure from the non-violent method will be confined to the narrowest field and will be temporary.'<sup>36</sup>

Attention should be drawn here to a singular feature of non-violent movements in India. Gandhi used to keep a close watch upon every manifestation of violence in connection with civil disobedience. Whenever any evidence of it was forthcoming, he tried to devise bolder steps in action, as in the Dharsana Raid of 1930; or suspended the movement, temporarily, as in Bardoli in 1922; or reduced it from a mass to an individual movement, as in 1933; or occasionally fasted against Congressmen themselves if there was suspicion that they had encouraged or even condoned violence. One result of this extraordinary watchfulness on his part was that his followers paid him an increasing measure of personal loyalty and obedience. He also rose in moral stature; but this seems to have been accompanied by a loss of initiative on the part of lesser leaders who desired to do no more than follow his

guidance, so long as they retained faith in the ultimate justice of his cause.

Theoretically, the organization of satyagraha should lead to an increasing measure of decentralization of authority. But, at least, in the case of India, it led to a loss of initiative, a progressive decrease in critical thinking and a greater concentration of authority, even though that authority was of a moral kind.

It is not unlikely that this happened in India because initiative had long lain dormant under alien rule ; or partly because life in the joint family, or under caste or village panchayats is under the rule of elders, which makes people more used to authoritarian rule than otherwise.

### **The Economy of Non-violence**

Quite apart from the leadership of a band of men in a critical situation, Gandhi had another proposal for training men in the non-violent way.

In his criticism against the British empire, he pointed out that political authority had been deliberately centralized in India in order to serve the commercial interests of England. Village republics were ruined, while production was forced no longer to serve local needs, but geared to the commercial interests of people who lived far away in towns and manipulated chiefly in the interest of profit.

Gandhi therefore advised political workers in India to build up the economic foundation of democracy through what was known as the Constructive Programme. It included, in 1941, eighteen items, of which one, namely, 'Economic Equality', was described by him as 'the master key to non-violent independence'.<sup>37</sup>

Gandhi was not a disbeliever in machinery, or even the use of electricity in villages. But he was emphatic in his view that these had to be owned and controlled by the State or regional republics, and run not for profit but for economizing human labour. In regard to inter-regional co-operation, he welcomed it wherever it was necessary, provided co-operation was free and on a basis of equality.

'The revival of the village is possible,' he wrote in 1936, 'only when it is no longer exploited. Industrialization on a mass scale will necessarily lead to passive exploitation of the villagers as the problems of competition and marketing come in. Therefore we have to concentrate on the village being self-contained, manufacturing mainly for use. Provided this character of the village industry is maintained, there would be no objection to villagers using even modern machines and tools that they can make and afford to use. Only, they should not be used as a means of exploitation of others.'<sup>38</sup>

'My idea of village Swaraj is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its vital wants, and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity.'<sup>39</sup>

A question was asked in 1934, if non-violent struggles on a small scale were not a better means of organizing strength and discipline among villagers than the indirect way of building up cottage industries like khadi or hand-spun and hand-woven cloth. The question and answer are given below.

'Q. Could we not start small battles on local or specific issues against capitalism in the villages and use them as a means of strengthening the people or bringing about a sense of co-operation among them in preference to the khadi method? When we have a choice between the two, which should we prefer? If we have to sacrifice all the work that we have built up in the villages in connection with khadi while fighting against the money-lender or the landed proprietor, for, say, a reduction in the rate of interest or increase in the share of agricultural produce, then what shall we do, provided the latter is more capable of evoking self-confidence among villagers than the khadi method of organization?

'A. It is a big proviso you have added at the end of the question. I cannot say if fights on local and specific issues against capitalists are more likely to generate the kind of determination and courage needed in a non-violent campaign. But if I concede you that point, then khadi would have to be sacrificed under the circumstances you quote. As a practical man, claiming to be an expert in non-violent methods, I should

advise you not to go in for that type of work in order to train the masses in self-consciousness and attainment of power.

'We are fighting for Swaraj in the non-violent way. If many workers in different parts of India engage in local battles of the sort you describe, then in times of necessity, the people all over India will not be able to make a common cause in a fight for Swaraj. Before civil disobedience can be practised on a vast scale, people must learn the art of civil or voluntary obedience. Our obedience to the Government is through fear, and the reaction against it is either violence itself or that species of it which is cowardice. But through khadi we teach people the art of civil obedience to an institution which they have built up for themselves. Only when they have learnt that art, can they successfully disobey something which they want to destroy in the non-violent way. That is why I would advise all workers not to fritter their fighting strength in many-sided battles, but to concentrate on peaceful khadi work in order to educate the masses into a condition necessary for a successful practice of non-violent non-co-operation. With their own exploitation, boycott of foreign cloth through picketing may easily be violent ; through the use of khadi it is most natural and absolutely non-violent.'<sup>40</sup>

The question of property being a vital one in human society, it is necessary to explain Gandhi's ideas in this respect before we proceed to examine his suggestions for the resolution of conflicts in the international sphere.

In February 1942, the following question and answer were published in the weekly newspaper, *Harijan*.

'Q. Why can't you see that whilst there is possession it must be defended against all odds ? Therefore your insistence that violence should be eschewed in all circumstances is utterly unworkable and absurd. I think non-violence is possible only for select individuals.

A..... I claim that even now, though the social structure is not based on a conscious acceptance of non-violence, all the world over men live and retain their possessions on the sufferance of one another. If they had not done so, only the fewest and most ferocious would have survived. But such is

not the case. Families are bound together by ties of love, and so are groups in the so-called civilized society called nations. Only they do not recognize the supremacy of the law of non-violence. It follows therefore, that they have not investigated its vast possibilities. Hitherto out of sheer inertia, shall I say, we have taken it for granted that complete non-violence is possible only for a few who take the vow of non-possession and the allied abstinences. Whilst it is true that the votaries alone can carry on research work and declare from time to time the new possibilities of the great eternal law governing man, if it is a law, it must hold good for all. The many failures we see are not of the law but of the followers, many of whom do not even know that they are under that law willy-nilly. I have been pleading for the past fifty years for a conscious acceptance of the law and its zealous practice even in the face of failures. Fifty year's work has shown marvellous results and strengthened my faith. I do claim that by constant practice we shall come to a state of things when lawful possession will command universal and voluntary respect. No doubt such possession will not be tainted. It will not be an insolent demonstration of the inequalities that surround us everywhere. Nor need the problem of unjust and unlawful possession appal the votary of non-violence. He has at his disposal the non-violent weapon of *Satyagraha* and non-co-operation which hitherto has been found to be a complete substitute of violence whenever it has been applied honestly and in sufficient measure.'<sup>41</sup>

### A Nation's Obligation

There is an old collection of fables in Sanskrit known as *Hitopadesha*. In it there is a verse which says, 'For the sake of the family, forsake the individual; for the sake of the village, forsake the family; for the sake of the country, forsake the village; and for the sake of the soul, forsake the whole world.'<sup>42</sup> This verse is also recorded in the ancient collection of moral instructions associated with the name of Chanakya; and thus formed part of India's traditional heritage.

It is interesting that Gandhi utilized the verse and gave it a completely new meaning. He placed service to mankind in the

position of highest virtue, and said in course of a speech in 1925, 'We want freedom for our country, but not at the expense or exploitation of others, not so as to degrade other countries. I do not want the freedom of India if it means the extinction of England or the disappearance of Englishmen. I want the freedom of my country so that other countries may learn something from my free country, so that the resources of my country might be utilized for the benefit of mankind. Just as the cult of patriotism teaches us today that the individual has to die for the family, the family has to die for the village, the village for the district, the district for the province, and the province for the country, even so, a country has to be free in order that it may die, if necessary, for the benefit of the world.'<sup>43</sup>

In the same spirit he also said, 'There is no limit to extending our services to our neighbours across State-made frontiers. God never made those frontiers.'<sup>44</sup>

Gandhi's idea was that *exclusive* possession was as much wrong in private life as in the international sphere. If there were not enough for everybody to go round, then all had to tighten their belts. It was exclusive possession which lay at the root of many wars. If every nation held the natural resources lying within its accidental geographical boundary as a steward on behalf of mankind, then many of the causes of conflict would automatically disappear. If some nations believed in this and lived accordingly, while others did not, and interfered with the peace of the world, then the conversion of the latter had to be brought about by the same process as in the case of private, or small-scale public conflicts.

It was in this insistence upon the human aspect of a question, upon his determined endeavour to reduce the abstract conflict of ideas or interests into negotiable human proportions that Gandhi was most typically Indian. In the panchayat system of rural India, it was possible to bring in human considerations easily, because the problems were usually on a small scale, and the parties or judges worked under the advantage of personal intimacy. Gandhi's genius lay in trying to adapt this to large-scale problems in which numberless people

were involved without personal acquaintance or sympathy with one another.

### **Nationalism and Internationalism**

When the war began in 1939, Gandhi clearly expressed his sympathy with the English nation. There was some misunderstanding in India ; so he wrote in explanation of his opinion : 'Let there be no mistake on the part of Englishmen, Congressmen or others whom my voice reaches, as to where my sympathy lies. It is not because I love the British nation and hate the German. I do not think the Germans as a nation are any worse than the English or the Italians are any worse. We are all tarred by the same brush, we are all members of the vast human family. I decline to draw distinctions. I cannot claim any superiority for Indians. We have the same virtues and the same vices. Humanity is not divided into water-tight compartments so that we cannot go from one to another. They may occupy a thousand rooms, but they are all related to one another. I would not say, " India should be all in all, let the world perish.".....India should be all in all consistently with the well-being of other nations in the world. I can keep India intact and its freedom also intact only if I have goodwill towards the whole of the human family and not merely for the human family which inhabits this little spot of earth called India.'<sup>45</sup>

Gandhi similarly expressed the opinion in 1924 that, 'Isolated independence is not the goal of the world States. It is voluntary interdependence.'<sup>46</sup>

### **A Programme of Non-violent Defence**

A nation which prepares for defence by means of arms has naturally to build up its own industries, enter into alliance with powers which occupy a strategic position, train its own personnel, and so on. No one dares to enter a war without adequate preparation. In the same manner, if a nation wishes to defend its possessions through non-violence, it has to subject them to scrutiny, and retain only that much which it can on the sufferance and goodwill of all nations. And even

with regard to that, it has to hold those resources as a steward on behalf of the entire human family. It is this preparation in peacetime which is of as much importance in satyagraha as the building up of industries is in war. The preparation described above is calculated to raise the status of a nation in the eyes of the world, and that is likely to be of service in the event of war.

Although Gandhi had no opportunity of helping India to put into practice the above rule in his lifetime, yet in order to appreciate the extension of the Indian tradition as he accomplished it by his genius, it would be proper to lay down the various steps in a hypothetical situation as he envisaged them in course of certain theoretical discussions.

In 1947, he said clearly that if any one desired to employ the non-violent method in the defence of property, he could never do so in respect of possessions which had been accumulated by violence. It was necessary to abandon such gains before non-violence could be fruitfully employed. Gandhi also held that capital could never be accumulated by private persons except through violence, whether open or tacit. If a people needed capital, as they naturally would, it could only be gathered by the State in a non-violent society.<sup>47</sup>

Supposing a nation did prepare itself in the above manner, yet, would that fact, or the moral stature so gained, insulate it from people who were minded otherwise? In Gandhi's opinion such aggression was a possibility as long as human nature was what it is today. But there was also a possibility of converting men into a better way of life through non-violent resistance.

He therefore expressed the opinion that the best defence lay, not in striking back, but in inviting the aggressors to march over the dead bodies of satyagrahis. If this happened and the aggressors then marched forward to occupy a country, the next step for the survivors would be to non-co-operate non violently with the forces of occupation. They were to refuse to work in the fields, factories and workshops in order to serve the interests of the conquerors. They were to pursue their own way of life as far as practicable under the circum-



stances ; follow no scorched-earth policy ; fraternize with the occupational forces and try to impress them by means of heroic, but non-violent resistance. They should, at the same time, be prepared to share their life and wealth with those soldiers who desired to live among them as equals.

Someone asked Gandhi in a slightly different context, if he hoped that the heart of a hardened criminal could ever be touched by the sufferings of a satyagrahi. Gandhi's faith was that such conversion was possible if the heroism and determination of the resisters belonged to a high order. Yet, as a practical man, he also admitted with sorrow that, in some cases, this might not be achievable. But there was the other possibility of weaning the followers or companions of such a leader from error. Common men, the world over, are neither wholly violent nor wholly non-violent. And it is from among them that soldiers of aggression are recruited. Even if they have been drilled and indoctrinated, yet, if the necessary environment could be created through satyagraha, it was Gandhi's faith that they, at least, would respond favourably. And if that happened, then the leader would be left stranded without adequate support. In other words, evil would become isolated ; and that was as far as one could expect to go in life.

Gandhi admitted that the above manner of defending one's country or one's cherished values required a higher degree of courage than was called for in warfare. Yet he held that unless humanity was prepared to experiment with some brave, new way of settling disputes like satyagraha, the moral stature of mankind would remain the same in spite of all material wealth which had been placed at the disposal of the human family by science and technology.

Gandhi held that the message of non-violence was as old as the hills ; yet, it was his belief that India, with its comparatively more well-developed tradition of non-violence, and memory of decentralized village republics of old, was perhaps comparatively in a better position to adapt the ancient method to the exigencies of modern times.

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## CHAPTER SEVEN

# MEANING & METHOD OF SATYAGRAHA\*

### Satyagraha and War Compared

I. 1. Satyagraha is a way of conducting 'war' by means of non-violence. As long as men are not very different from what they are now there will be clashes of interest ; and it appears desirable that such conflicts should be carried on in the most civilized, economical and effective manner possible. Mahatma Gandhi hoped that satyagraha could be that method.

I. 2. In war one tries to subdue one's enemy by means of punishment. A successful war ends in the victory of one party and defeat of another. In satyagraha, on the other hand, both sides are eventually expected to arrive at an agreed solution based upon justice and fairness. As the end is a joint achievement, there is neither victory nor defeat.

I. 3. a. Non-violence does not mean shunning battle. In Gandhi's own case it was active and even militant at times.

I. 3. b. In ordinary war, the enemy is subjected to punishment ; and victory comes when the striking power of the victor is greater than that which the other side can marshal at a decisive moment of the campaign. A satyagrahi, however, acts in a different way. He distinguishes between a person and the system which he upholds. The satyagrahi's aim is to non-co-operate with the system if he holds it to be wrong. Thus he draws punishment upon himself in course of non-co-operation. Ideally, it is his purpose to dazzle the 'enemy' by steadfast courage, even while he makes his opponent feel

\*Summary of a talk given on 4 June 1960 at the Poona Seminar on 'Roots of International Understanding' organized by the American Friends Service Committee.

that there is no threat to the latter's life. When the latter's heart is touched out of respect for the heroism of the satyagrahi, the door is likely to be opened to his reason ; and then the way is also opened to an agreed solution between those who had so long been in 'combat'.

I. 3. c. All through such non-violent non-co-operation, a satyagrahi tries to discover how much is right on his opponent's side, even while he holds on steadfastly to what he considers to be 'right on his own. During this attempt, he also learns to distinguish between what is essential and what is non-essential. The essential is never surrendered. But it may be enriched by incorporating that much from the opponent's side which is based on justice and fairness. Non-essentials may always be sacrificed for the sake of arriving at an agreed solution. As has been stated already, the end of non-violent non-co-operation is an agreement to which both sides can subscribe after they have learnt to respect one another's viewpoint in course of the conflict.

### Preparation

II. 1. War with arms requires a period of preparation before one can hope to bring it to a successful conclusion. A non-violent war likewise needs adequate preparation. Such preparation should preferably precede the battle. But if a battle becomes inevitable, preparation may be carried on simultaneously with the battle. Only, then the war becomes more complicated and challenges the intelligence and spiritual integrity, as well as the organizational ability, of the satyagrahi to a greater extent.

II. 2. One can defend by means of non-violence only such things as can be gained through non-violence. Anything procured by violence cannot be defended by non-violence.

II. 3. The preparation for non-violent defence consists in setting one's own house in order. Inequalities and injustices in one's domestic as well as community relationship have to be progressively removed by means of non-violence. This is a necessary step in the preparation for defence against foreign aggression by satyagraha.

II. 4. But one need not wait indefinitely for completion of the above preparation. Perhaps it is never really complete.

II. 5. A non-violent economic and social structure is one in which there are no privileged and unprivileged classes. Differences between individuals are natural. But it is wrong to build up an unequal social system on the basis of this, in which individuals of talent, or their progeny, are allowed to group together into a privileged class at the expense of the rest of the community. (This can be achieved by doing away with the present law of inheritance of property.)

II. 6. a. The satyagrahi's endeavour is to build up such a classless society by means of a 'constructive programme'. Its details will naturally vary from one country to another ; but its essence lies in an endeavour to bring about decentralization of both economic and political authority.

II. 6. b. As long as human nature is what it is, the State is likely to remain as a necessity. Gandhi's ideal was to reduce its function to the minimum. Work now carried on largely by the State was to be distributed among organizations based on voluntary association from which withdrawal is possible in case of difference on fundamentals. The State is, in contrast, based upon coercive power.

II. 6. c. Decentralization implies that units having authority 'over the means of production of the elementary necessities of life should remain under the control of the masses'. They should preferably be under voluntary organizations of small dimension, and run not for profit but for making the advantages of joint ownership available to everyone without distinction.

II. 6. d. But smallness in size is not an ideal in itself. Voluntary associations may bring about centralization for particular purposes when necessary. The crux of the problem of decentralization lies only partially in size, but very much in the voluntary or involuntary character of the constituent elements of social association.

**'Constructive work' and the Nation-State**

III. 1. When the model of a satyagrahi's future society has been partially built up even on a small scale by means of 'constructive programme' and/or local satyagraha for specific ends when necessary, he should let it be known adequately among his potential friends and potential adversaries.

III. 2. Even while building up that small model, it should be his special endeavour to win over to his side as many individuals as possible from the opponent's camp. While publicizing these facts, he should build up the credit that in the new social order to which he belongs, there is room for men of all colours and of all communities. Thus he should try to build up a goodwill for the final event, namely, the battle for defence of his ideal through non-violence.

III. 3. a. In the meanwhile, the satyagrahi can extend his constructive work at home by trying to induce his community, and the State to which he legally belongs, to share its goods with communities living in other States when the latter are in need. Such sharing must be on the principle that everything belongs to the entire human family, and exclusive possession, even at the national level, can only be maintained by means of violence.

III. 3. b. Gandhi wanted India to be free so that 'if need be, the whole country may die, so that the human races may live'. He also said that there was no limit to 'extending one's services across State-made frontiers. God never made those frontiers'.

**Defence**

IV. 1. As preparation thus proceeds on a small scale as well as on a larger 'national' scale, an 'enemy' country may by chance think it fit to turn into an aggressor. The first step in defence should consist of sending a band of satyagrahis who attempt to face the aggressors, talk to them, if possible, even while they are prepared to be mowed down, yet not lift a finger in order to hurt the 'enemy' in so-called self-defence.

IV. 2. After this, the 'enemy' may advance to 'occupy' the land. There is to be no scorched-earth policy. But the



satyagrahi country should be prepared to live peacefully with members of the 'occupational force' on its own terms. The latter must be made to feel that they are welcome to live as workers and equals sharing in the toil and upkeep of the satyagrahi's social system.

IV. 3. Otherwise, the satyagrahi refuses to submit and disobeys orders, but does not in any way make the occupational force to feel that their lives are threatened.

IV. 4. If the courage and determination of the satyagrahi is strong enough, members of the enemy camp will start thinking. This is particularly likely if they are not afraid or on the defensive. When this operation begins, the effects of indoctrination to which they have hitherto been subjected will begin to wear out. The process is accentuated if, as pointed out above, the satyagrahi is prepared to accept whatever is based on 'truth' in his opponent's point of view.

IV. 5. Gandhi's ideal was to convert even the General on the other side, as much as the common soldier who worked under that General, to his point of view. If the worst happened and the General proved intractable, his hope was that, by the conversion of the common soldier, the evil represented by the General would become isolated. And this would constitute the highest achievement that is humanly possible in real life by means of collective non-violence.

### **Individual and Collective Non-violence**

V. 1. Many like Socrates or Jesus have proved the worth of non-violence in the past. By means of unflinching courage and steadfast adherence to what they held to be true even to the point of death, and their refusal ever to treat an opponent as anything but a brother and equal, they proved that true faith is unconquerable. Gandhi only tried to extend the same technique to larger bodies of men. He held that non-violence, in order to be a practical ideal, could not afford to wait until every individual had become perfect. According to him, it was open to common men and women, in combination, to try and become progressively more perfect even while they carried on the battle against wrong and injustice. They were initially to place themselves voluntarily

under the discipline of non-violence ; and as their practice became more intelligent and more vitalized by a growing consideration of the opponent less as an enemy and more as a human being and equal, they would also discover that their non-violence was becoming more and more effective.

V. 2. Gandhi's originality lay in fashioning a tool of collective non-violence out of what had hitherto lain in the private armoury of singularly great individuals.

### Choice of Satyagrahis

VI. 1. Those who are subject to a particular wrong should alone offer satyagraha for the sake of remedy. As a general rule, others may not join, but may help by watching and offering friendly criticism or by advertising the cause and the campaign, if they consider it to be just.

VI. 2. A satyagrahi can fight only in a moral or just cause. 'There can be no *Satyagrah* in an unjust cause' (YI, 27-4-1921, 129). 'Non-violence in the very nature of things is of no assistance in the defence of ill-gotten gains and immoral acts' (H, 5-9-1936, 236).

VI. 3. a. A satyagraha campaign is not open exclusively to those who have attained perfection in non-violence, but to anyone who is prepared to conform to the rules during the campaign.

VI. 3. b. Only those who are in the habit of obeying laws and maintaining discipline in normal times should proceed to offer civil disobedience.

VI. 4. a. The campaign should preferably be conducted through an existing democratic organization. Failing this an *ad hoc* organization may be built up under the same principles of democracy.

VI. 4. b. There should be division of work in a camp. Publicity or other work at headquarters need not be considered lower than actual 'combat'.

VI. 5. As experience grows, satyagrahis should guide their action more and more by certain principles and depend on their own initiative as the campaign becomes scattered. Decentralization of leadership under the latter condition is an essential part of satyagraha.

### The Demand

VII. 1. The demand in a campaign should be brought down to the irreducible minimum without sacrificing anything which is essential.

The demand should never be lowered to please an adversary.

VII. 2. a. 'In a pure fight, the fighters should never go beyond the objective when the fight began, even if they have received an accession to their strength in course of the fighting and, on the other hand, they could not give up their objective if they found their strength dwindling away' (SA, 412).

VII. 2. b. The 'law of progression applies to every righteous struggle . in the case of Satyagraha the law amounts to an axiom .... For in Satyagraha the minimum is also the maximum, and as it is the irreducible minimum, there is no question of retreat, and the only movement possible is an advance. In other struggles, even when they are righteous, the demand is first pitched a little higher so as to admit of future reduction, and hence the law of progression does not apply to all of them without exception.

'No matter how strong we (are), the present struggle must close, when the demands for which it is commenced (are) accepted. . . . If (however) the adversary creates new difficulties . . . while the struggle is in progress, they become automatically included in it' (SA, 319).

### Negotiation, Timing, etc

VIII. 1. 'As a Satyagrahi, I must always allow my cards to be examined and re-examined at all times and make reparation if an error is discovered' (H, 11-3-1939, 44).

'Anyone who objects to the right thing, puts himself in the wrong' (H, 13-1-1940, 411).

'What I (plead for) is desire and readiness for negotiation. It is not inconceivable that the stage of negotiation may never be reached. If it is not, it must not be for the fault of the Satyagrahi' (H, 24-6-1939, 170).

VIII. 2. One should refuse to take advantage of the opponent's weak moments if they have not been the result of satyagraha, but due to extraneous reasons.

VIII. 3. 'It will be contrary to every canon of Satyagraha to launch upon the extreme step till every other is exhausted. Such haste will itself constitute violence' (*H*, 24-6-1939, 172).

VIII. 4. 'The aim of the non-violent worker must ever be to convert. He may not however wait endlessly. When therefore the limit is reached, he takes risks and conceives plans of active Satyagraha which may mean civil disobedience and the like. His patience is never exhausted to the point of giving up his creed' (*YI*, 6-2-1930, 44).

'But when he has found the impelling call of the inner voice within him and launches out upon Satyagrah he has burnt his boats and there is no receding' (*YI*, 20-10-1927, 353).

### Educating the Public

IX. 1. a. 'An awakened and intelligent public opinion is the most potent weapon of a Satyagrahi' (*YI*, 8-8-1929, 263).

IX. 1. b. 'I believe that a struggle which chiefly relies upon internal strength cannot be wholly carried on without a newspaper, and it is also my experience that we could not perhaps have educated the local Indian community, nor kept Indians all over the world in touch with the course of events in South Africa in any other way, with the same ease and success as through *Indian Opinion*, which therefore was certainly a most useful and potent weapon in our struggle.

'As the community was transformed in course of and as a result of the struggle, so was *Indian Opinion*' (*SA*, 221).

IX. 2. 'If the luxury of wires be denied to us, we must manage with the post. If the postal communication be also stopped we must use messengers. No amount of slowness imposed from without can checkmate us, if we are sure within' (*YI*, 15-12-1921, 408).

'So long as all have pen and paper or even slate and pencil, we need not despair of transmitting our thoughts in

writing, if we have enough volunteers. Given a sufficient number of volunteer writers, we can multiply copies indefinitely' (YI, 9-3-1921, 73).

'Let everyone become his own walking newspaper and carry the news from mouth to mouth. They should not indulge in idle gossip. They should make sure of the source of the information' (H, 10-11-1940, 334).

IX. 3. 'Do not concentrate on showing the misdeeds of the Government, for we have to convert and befriend those who run it. And after all no one is wicked by nature. And if others are wicked, are we the less so? That attitude is inherent in Satyagraha' (H, 30-3-1940, 71).

'All the songs and speeches betokening hatred must be taboo' (YI, 2-4-1931, 58).

### Leadership

X. 1. 'Those who claim to lead the masses must resolutely refuse to be led by them, if we want to avoid mob law and desire ordered progress of the country. I believe that mere protestation of one's opinion and surrender to the mass opinion is not only not enough, but in matters of vital importance, leaders must act contrary to the mass of opinion if it does not commend itself to their reason' (YI, 14-7-1920)

X. 2. 'A leader is useless when he acts against the promptings of his own conscience, surrounded as he must be by people holding all kinds of views. He will drift like an anchorless ship if he has not the inner voice to hold him firm and guide him' (YI, 23-2-1922, 112).

### The Campaign

#### *Caution in popular action*

XI. 1. 'Resistance, violent or non-violent, has to be well thought out. Thoughtless resistance will be regarded as bravado in military parlance, and violence or folly in the language of non-violence. Retreat itself is often a plan of resistance and may be a precursor of greater bravery and sacrifice. Every retreat is not cowardice which implies fear to

die. Of course a brave man would more often die in violently or non-violently resisting the aggressor in the latter's attempt to oust him. But he will be no less brave if wisdom dictates present retreat' (*H*, 12-4-1942, 109).

VI. 2. 'A wise general does not wait till he is actually routed; he withdraws in time in an orderly manner from a position which he knows he would not be able to hold' (*H*, 22-10-1938, 304).

VI. 3. 'We must tell the people what they should do. They will act according to capacity. If we begin to judge their capacity and give directions accordingly, our directions will be halting and even compromising which we should never do' (*GC*, 310).

### **But Regarding the Leaders**

VII. 1. 1. 'There is no limit for a Satyagrahi nor is there a limit to his capacity for suffering' (*YI*, 19-2-1925, 61).

VII. 1. 2. 'They must develop infinite faith in the capacity of ahimsa to neutralise every person of himsa. True ahimsa (lies) in running into the mouth of himsa. They must shed their disbelief in the power of ahimsa to achieve the seemingly impossible' (*H*, 29-4-1939, 104-105).

### **A Word of Caution**

VIII. 1. 'Let us all be brave enough to die the death of a martyr, but let no one lust for martyrdom' (*H*, 13-1-1927, 10).

## CHAPTER EIGHT

# GANDHI IN INDIAN POLITICS

### Introduction

So far, an effort has been made to present the ideas of Gandhi on specific economic and political questions. It shall be our purpose now to describe and analyze how he actually proceeded to put them into practice.

One of his outstanding characteristics as a public man lay in the fact that if he wanted to give effect to an idea, he chose existing organizations instead of trying to build up new institutions for the purpose. Even if that became necessary at times, he tried to set them up by means of resolutions passed in some existing organization of standing, so that the new institution could function under favourable auspices; and more and more people became involved in it, even if indirectly.

Gandhi's economic, as well as social ideals in part, have already been described. But temperamentally, or perhaps constitutionally, he was also inclined in certain particular ways. This gave a personal character to much that he tried to do, while it also cast its shadow upon those who worked with him, and brought about a modification in the character of the institutions through which he worked.

Two such ideas may be presented here by way of illustration. One was Gandhi's habit of 'turning the searchlight inwards' whenever he was faced by a critical situation. If the

Indian people were under subjugation, or suffering from certain brutal disabilities, he argued that there must be some weakness in the language which made such subjugation possible. So, his first aim was to set his own house in order, or strive for 'internal sacrifice', as he phrased it. At the same time, he tried to

bring about necessary organizational changes 'outside'. Success in the first was to be registered by change in the second. An alteration in the second became meaningful only with corresponding change within. This led even his formally political activities at times in the direction of social reform.

One might perhaps ascribe this characteristic of Gandhi to the view held by him that various parts of human life were not to be treated as discrete or unrelated phenomena ; they were integrally and organically related to one another.

The other tendency of Gandhi which we wanted to illustrate was his habit of concentration upon the problem which was immediately in hand, rather than upon the more distant scene. He loved to say that 'one step was enough' for him. In consequence, a kind of contradiction became noticeable from time to time between what he had done in the past and what he proposed to do now. But his defence was that he modified action in accordance with his expanding view of truth. What was, however, consistent throughout was his determination to stand by truth as he saw it in its completeness at a particular moment.

One result of the above traits in his character lay in his refusal to change unless convinced. And it was indeed hard to convince him ; for he often appeared to lean on the side of obstinacy. But this very habit gave him an advantage, namely, that he could go into details of execution in a manner which was of a very high order. Secondly, when others differed from him honestly and on vital issues, he could easily bring himself into a position when he wanted freedom from them to go his own way, while he reciprocated by according the same freedom to others who differed.

With these observations, let us now proceed to study the part which Gandhi played in Indian political developments in recent times. His understanding of or influence upon the masses was of an amazing kind. And this was also true about his relation with many national leaders. This began to exercise itself from about 1917 till his death in 1948 ; or perhaps, more correctly, till the achievement of independence in 1947. After this it seems to have begun to peter out rapidly as an active



force in the political field. This Gandhian phase in Indian politics has left a thin sediment behind, consisting partly of ideology, and partly of a high moral standard demanded in public behaviour. But one can hardly foretell if the ideas or morals which he represented and tried to popularize by practical steps will sprout up once more in the soil of India, or in some other part of the world where conditions may be more favourable.

### **The Heritage**

#### **(a) Nationalism**

During the whole of the 19th century, India progressively came under the dominance of English economic influence. But various parts of India were unequally affected ; and this was also true in the fields of political and cultural organization.

There already existed in India a strong sense of cultural uniformity, for life was based upon a common pattern of production, in which immigrant communities who had made India their home, also shared. Thus, Muslims and Christians became endogamous communities, and subscribed to notions of high and low in regard to occupations as under caste. All Hindus were subject to similar or uniform laws of inheritance and succession, while life was ruled by similar or identical religious or social ordinances. Although Muslims and Christians remained outside such influence, and thus refused to become part of Hindu society, yet they came eventually to occupy positions somewhat analogous to those occupied by non-conformist sects like the Jainas, Buddhists or Sikhs.

But this cultural unity built up intentionally by Indian thinkers of the past, did not bring about a sense of political unity. The two remained independent, until one was employed to fortify the other from the middle of the 19th century onwards.

Nationalism in Europe had arisen as a product of preparation for war among communities which vied with one another either in the field of commerce and industry or in the battlefield. National unification was brought about by dissolving local differences, and their substitution by a 'national

culture'. It was the product of a thinned-out war mentality, where the chief strength of a nation was drawn from a feeling of *separateness* from other similar communities. The latter was quite often attended by a feeling also of superiority over others through one kind of justification or another.

India was not such a nation before her Western-educated classes began mentally to prepare themselves for a struggle against the political and cultural domination of the West. And Gandhi, who was born in an age in India when nationalism was regarded as her new religion, was influenced by it to some extent in his younger days. His experience of racial discrimination in South Africa helped only to reinforce that feeling. But his admiration for English character and for English institutions led him to desire a permanent alliance with the British through their empire, which was, in spite of its proved weaknesses, better as an agent of progress than any other institution which he foresaw for the future of India.

#### (b) *The Muslim Sect*

Educated Muslims did not always look upon the Hindus of India as their equals. Their sympathies lay more in the direction of their co-religionists in western Asia.

It might be useful to present here the views of the President of the Indian National Congress at Coconada in 1923 in this particular respect. Maulana Muhammad Ali, the President, said,

'When, in 1885, some Indian leaders, assisted by their British sympathisers, founded the Indian National Congress, the Musalmans of India did not participate in the movement except in a few individual cases. If their lack of Western education made them unfit to take part in a movement essentially that of the classes educated according to Western notions, their political temper made them an element that was not unlikely to prove dangerous to any political movement. They had already lost the rule of India, but the tradition of that rule had survived. This had increased the aversion they had always felt for the new type of education.....a whole generation of Musalmans kept sullenly aloof from all contact with the culture of the new rulers of India which in their heart

of hearts they still despised. They were in no mood to take advantage of the education provided by the Universities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, founded in the very year in which the Mutiny convulsed the regions which formed the political centre of Muslim India' ( IAR 1923, II, 23).

Evidently, Mr. Muhammad Ali considered 'the Muslim community as a community of rulers, rather than as a loose-knit community divided into rich and poor, Sheikh and Mumin, Sunni or Shiah, and even Ahmadiyah. This was matched on the other side, among the Hindus, by the division of that community into rich and poor, dominant or suppressed in caste, sections speaking many languages, but out of which, the great national leaders of India had been trying to forge a 'nation' in the European sense of the term from the latter part of the 19th century onwards.

The Aligarh Movement had about the same purpose, namely, to forge a strong sense of nationhood among the scattered forces of Muslims in India. The Muslim League was established in the end of 1906 ; separate electorates established by the British in 1909. In his Presidential speech referred to above, Muhammad Ali also said, 'In the common territorial electorates the Musalmans had certainly not succeeded in securing anything like adequate or real representation, and those who denounced and deplored the creation of separate electorates for which the Musalmans had pleaded should have remembered that separate electorates were the consequence, and NOT the cause, of separation between Musalmans and their more numerous Hindu brethren' (IAR 1923, 27).

The Indian National Congress and the Muslim League had already come to an understanding at Lucknow in 1916 in which both 'accepted separate electorates for Musalmans and allowed them representation much in excess of their proportion of population in the Provinces except in the Punjab and Bengal' (Rajendra Prasad 1946, 118). In a book entitled *The Story of My Life*, M. R. Jayakar writes, 'amongst those who took a prominent part in bringing about this Pact at Lucknow was Tilak, which surprised many nationalists of his time.

Gokhale had accepted communal electorates in 1909. Tilak did so in 1916' (Jayakar 1958, I, 161).

This was therefore one of the important elements of the political climate under which Gandhi had to operate after his return from South Africa to India in the end of 1915.

**(c) Caste and Class**

Caste and class had not yet become important factors in the political situation in India in 1915. The divisions existed ; but they remained confined within the field of economic or social backwardness alone.

As an intellectual disciple of Ruskin and Tolstoy, Gandhi saw the cleavage a little differently from most other political leaders. His reading of the economic history of India under British rule, combined with his sympathies as derived from both Ruskin and Tolstoy, led him to draw the line between Village and Town, between the toilers in the field and town-dwellers who, in his language, had aligned themselves with the rulers in order to live upon the toils of the working people who mostly inhabited the villages (*Selections*, no. 238).

**(d) Militant Nationalism**

There was one more force of a different order which had moved India in the direction of nationalism and war, and which thus furnished part of the climate under which Gandhi was to work in future.

Ever since the last quarter of the 19th century, some individuals, generally described as 'revolutionaries', had decided to offer battle to the British rulers for the sake of the country's independence. There were both individuals as well as organizations in Maharashtra and Bengal which worked with such an end in view (*Report of the Sedition Committee 1918*).

The Partition of Bengal in 1905 and the subsequent Swadeshi Movement had thrown the whole of nationalist India into a kind of mental preparedness for some militant form of political action. The first world war offered an opportunity, and, at least, two large-scale endeavours were made at that time whose purpose was to strike a heavy blow against British authority (see C. R. Das's speech : *IA*R 1925, I, 389-392).

There was an effort to organize a rising in the Indian Army stretching from the Punjab to Bengal ; while the aim of the second was to import German arms into eastern India and employ guerilla tactics in order to keep a section of the British forces engaged, while rapidly organizing general strikes and risings against British rule by the common people all over that part of the country.

Both of these plans had, however, proved abortive. But both had been accompanied by singular feats of heroism. Tales were carried from mouth to mouth, and helped to familiarize people with the goal of liberty. And their morale was also indirectly raised by tales of courage of those who came to be regarded as 'national heroes'.

### **Gandhi seeks an Organization for Work**

With the heritage described above, Gandhi laid before himself certain specific aims when he began his political career in India. If one looks back with some amount of discrimination on the past, one notices that the chief task which he set before himself was the collective organization of the working people in terms of non-violence (see *supra*, 38). To this was, of course, added a few ancillary aims like the political independence of India, the removal of untouchability and the like. And for these purposes, he now tried to join a suitable organization ; and his first choice seems to have fallen upon the Servants of India Society in Poona. Gokhale, whom he regarded as his political guru, was closely associated with that institution

M. R. Jayakar relates an amusing episode connected with Gandhi, when as a probationer into the above Society, he started 'one morning the work of cleaning the latrines of the little colony of the Society at Poona' (Jayakar 1958, 316). He also records Gokhale's conversation in which the latter expressed the opinion that Gandhi was 'going to be in the vanguard of a great movement', but could not be depended upon very much where delicate political negotiations were involved. Yet, Gokhale seems to have been keen to receive Gandhi into the Society. But as there was a sharp division of opinion among existing members, Gandhi eventually withdrew

his application for membership (Gandhi 1940, 456-57 and 471-72).

The next arena where one meets Gandhi once more is in the Home Rule League. This organization was founded in the middle of 1917, and had several regional branches presided over by Balgangadhar Tilak, Mrs. Annie Besant and M. A. Jinnah. Jinnah was President of the Bombay Branch and M. R. Jayakar its Vice-President. The latter writes in his book how 'at an evil moment some of the promoters of the League conceived the idea of asking Gandhi to be its head, in order that the Bombay Branch of the League might assume the same importance as its sister branches, over one of which Tilak presided and, over another, Mrs. Besant' (Jayakar 1958, 319). Jayakar opposed it as his fear was that 'at a critical time when it was carrying on a patient agitation on constructive lines', it would be risky to admit Gandhi, whose dependence was largely upon unconstitutional methods.

It is interesting to recall the the conversation which passed between Jayakar and Gandhi at a meeting called for the purpose of considering the question of the latter's admittance into the League. Jayakar said, 'You are an all-India man, in fact a world figure. Your ideals are international, the gospel which you preach is for the acceptance of the entire human race, you have even transcended the limits of nationalism; I am doubtful whether it would be right for you, and for us to allow you, to be bottled up within the confines of a small organization like our League whose region of activities is limited and variable, and whose methods have to change from time to time, in response to the attitude of the British Government, sometimes descending into a form of hostility, which you may probably find to be in conflict with your gospel of love and peace..... It is not impossible that you will demand from us, before long, a change in our objects and aims, and even try to secure in our creed a place for some of your pet theories which many of us may be inclined to regard as fantastic fads.'

In reply Gandhi said, 'May I tell you that the only "fad" on which I would insist, if I ultimately decided to join your

League, would be a common language for India, to be found in one of the vernaculars of the country, and the gospel of *Swadeshi*. You need have no apprehension that any other theories of mine your League will be called upon to accept.'

And thus, it was finally decided that Gandhi should be accepted as a member of the Home Rule League, of which he was also made President (Jayakar 1958, 318).

An interesting sidelight is cast upon the functions of the Home Rule League as envisaged by, at least, one of the Presidents. Mr. E. S. Montagu, Secretary of State for India, has recorded in his *Diary* how Mrs. Besant 'gave me the history of the Home Rule League, how she felt it necessary to get hold of the young boys; how, if the Home Rule League policy could be carried out, she was certain that they would forswear anarchy and come on to the side of the constitutional movement. She assured us solemnly that India would have, and insisted upon having, the power of the purse and the control of the Executive' (Jayakar 1958, 216).\*

Of course, we are to assume that Mr. Montagu understood Mrs. Besant correctly, and also reported correctly. But the views held by Mrs. Besant do not seem to be impossible. She had been one of those who had protested strongly against Gandhi's 'anarchistic' speech during the opening ceremony of the Benares Hindu University on 4 February 1916 (*Speeches*, 324).

Nearly a year passed by. In the meanwhile, historic events had taken place in India and Gandhi felt that it was time for action. He had accordingly assembled members of the Home Rule League and succeeded in changing the creed as well as the name of the organization. In consequence, members like M. A. Jinnah, M. R. Jayakar, K. M. Munshi, Kanji Dwarkadas and fifteen others addressed a letter of resignation on 27 October 1920 to the 'President (Gandhi), Swarajya Sabha

\*We have, however, a more objective and pleasanter picture of the achievements of the Home Rule League in Mrs. Besant's Presidential Address at the Indian National Congress in 1917 (Sitaramayya 1946, I, 130, 137, 150).

formerly All India Home Rule League.' In course of that letter, it was said :

'The new Constitution deliberately omits any reference to the British connection in Clause 2(1) which lays down the goal of the League and Clause 2(2) thereof is clearly permissible of unconstitutional and illegal activities provided they are peaceful and effective. We are further of opinion that these changes in the Constitution were made by adopting a procedure contrary to the rules and regulations of the League. We venture to say that your ruling, aiming at validating the said procedure, was both incorrect and arbitrary. We hold to the ideas and methods embodied in the Congress Constitution and we further believe that a body like the League, affiliated as it is to the Indian National Congress, must restrict itself to methods of work which were considered by the Indian National Congress as constitutional'\* (Jayakar 1958, 405).

### **Relation with the Indian National Congress**

The aims and methods of operation of the Indian National Congress had been 'constitutional' in the above sense of the true ever since its inception in 1885. Its greatest achievement had been to bring together once every year, educated and politically inclined Indians from all over the country for the purpose of discussing questions relating to the political and economic advance of the country taken as a whole. It had already succeeded in forging a deep sense of nationalism, which seemed also to filter down to larger and larger masses of the common people.

The interests which the Congress sponsored were mainly connected with the political rights of the Indian people. But questions of a more basic character involving equality of rights as citizens of the British Empire, or removal of discrimination which operated in the fields of justice or the professions, and in trade and industry, were also discussed from

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\*One may be reminded here that Gandhi succeeded in bringing about a change in the constitution of the Indian National Congress itself in 1920, i.e. shortly after the above incident happened in the Home Rule League. Also see Gandhi's statement on assumption of Presidentship of the League in Sitaramayya 1946, 192—193.



time to time. Occasionally, recommendations were made in regard to lifting the burden upon the ryots by suitable measures of land reform.

Gandhi's introduction to the Indian National Congress took place in 1901, when he was permitted to propose a resolution on the condition of Indians in South Africa where he was already engaged in a satyagraha campaign. In spite of limitations which he noticed in the working of the organization, it did not take long for him to decide after return to India that this was going to be one of the principal organizations through which he might be able to carry out his plan of work.

### Between 1915 and 1919

We have observed how Gandhi tried to gain admission into one organization or another so that he might put his ideas into practice. At the same time, his primary intention of organizing the masses for satyagraha proceeded in an uninterrupted manner. It would be useful to analyze three movements in which he became involved in order to gather whatever light they may throw upon the organizational aspects of collective non-violence.

#### (a) *Champaran\**

The relation between indigo-planters and ryots in northern Bihar had been strained ever since the second quarter of the 19th century (Ray Chaudhury 1952, 13-24). It continued to be so until 1917 when Gandhi came upon the scene.

During 1907 and 1908 three farmers named Seikh Gulab, Sital Ray and Radhemal organized a resistance movement against the planters' oppression. As a result, they were ordered by the local Government to enrol themselves as Special Constables. This was meant to be a measure of keeping them away from the movement. The peasants refused, and were then convicted for disobedience of orders. An appeal was however preferred at the High Court when the conviction was set aside in March 1908. Several leading newspapers in Calcutta and Patna took up the cause of the ryots and gave it

\*See *Speeches*, 273-278; Williams 1919, 87-89; Ray Chaudhry 1955; Rajendraprasad 1949a, 1949b, 1-34 and Gandhi 1940, 494-519.

fairly wide publicity. But the oppression continued unabated. Indeed, during the first world war, the Planters Association and a voluntary defence organization named Bihar Light Horse 'practically guided the administration of the province' (ibid., 18). The ryots remained unorganized and benumbed with fear ; while a few educated persons who sympathized with them did not dare to take up their cause actively.

It was in this state of affairs that a local peasant named Rajkumar Shukla decided to attend the annual session of the Indian National Congress at Lucknow in December 1916, in order to lay down the case of the ryots before national leaders. It eventually transpired that the Congress passed a resolution urging upon the Government to appoint a committee of enquiry into the 'causes of the agrarian trouble and strained relations between the Indigo ryots and the European Planters in North Bihar' (Rajendraprasad 1949a, 48). Gandhi was in that Congress and Shukla saw him here, as well as in Calcutta. Subsequently, in order to acquaint himself personally with the situation, Gandhi reached Bihar on 10th April 1917.

The Government immediately issued an order upon him to quit the district. But Gandhi refused, pleaded guilty and expressed his willingness to accept any punishment, but not abandon the enquiry on which he had come. This refusal to obey a Government order at once made him a hero of the peasants. Thousands of farmers flocked into the town in order to have their statements recorded. The fear of the planters and of the Police, in whose presence statements were often recorded after careful cross-examination, seemed suddenly to have become considerably relaxed.

Eventually, the Government withdrew the case against Gandhi for disobedience of orders ; a committee of enquiry was appointed officially, and the findings of the band of volunteers who had assisted Gandhi was fully confirmed. Within a short time, an Act was passed inspite of initial resistance by planters ; and in a few years indigo plantation became a thing of the past in Bihar. Already the industry had been seriously crippled by its synthetic substitute.

An analysis of the Champaran satyagraha shows at least one thing. It was the courage of the leader which helped to organize the courage of the masses. They had already proved their worth in 1908 ; but then the resistance had been limited to individuals or small groups. But now, on account of the open character of Gandhi's defiance, and his quiet courage and determination, the example seemed suddenly to become infectious among the peasantry. Thousands followed his example, and the movement became a positive political force.

One might also draw attention to the fact that the morality of the ryots' demand was already an established fact. Gandhi only organized a detailed investigation in order to lay it upon the firm foundation of exactness and justice.

It is also interesting to draw attention to a remark made by Gandhi in this connection which was recorded by Rajendraprasad. Mrs. Besant had been interned a short while ago, on account of agitation for Home Rule which she led at the time ; and her internment had almost convulsed the whole country. Gandhi himself was ardently in favour of home rule for India. But when Rajendraprasad expressed a desire to participate in that agitation, he was advised by Gandhi not to do so, but concentrate on the work in Champaran. 'By the very silence (they) were doing the highest kind of Home Rule work' (Rajendraprasad 1949b, 19).

This advice sprang from two reasons. One was, Gandhi wanted the workers to concentrate wholly upon the present task. The other was, that he wanted to set his opponents at ease. Indeed he wrote, 'In consultation with my co-workers I had decided that nothing should be done in the name of the Congress. What we wanted was work and not name, substance and not shadow. For the name of the Congress was a *bete noire* of the Government and their controllers—the planters (Gandhi 1940, 503).

(b) *Kheda or Kaira\**

In Champaran, peasants had not been called upon to participate in satyagraha directly ; Gandhi's was the solitary

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\*See IAR 1919, pt. iv, 73-84; Gandhi 1940, 531-538; *Speeches*, 279-304; and a Gujarati book referred to by Gandhi in his *Autobiography* on the history of the Kaira satyagraha by Shankarlal Parikh of Kathlal, Kaira.

example of civil disobedience. The Governor of Bihar was himself sympathetic, and the Government came to the aid of the ryots. So the planters had eventually to capitulate. But the circumstances in Kaira District in Gujarat were essentially different in 1918.

Crops had failed, and peasants prayed for a suspension of revenue. Gandhi was then President of the Gujarat Sabha. This organization, as well as some members of the Servants of India Society, initiated a detailed economic enquiry, and concluded that the prayer of the peasants was justified. Government were however reluctant to make an admission. Gandhi, therefore, organized meetings with the help of his wife and of V. J. Patel and others. A declaration was signed by hundreds and hundreds of peasants to the effect that they would rather 'allow their land to be confiscated than pay either full or the remaining revenue'.

Gandhi's endeavour was to lift the economic battle to a political plane. In a speech on 6 April 1918, he is reported to have said that 'if they wanted to gain "Swarajya" they ought to learn to be firm in their vows. He then exhorted them to keep faith in themselves and not depend upon others. If it failed, agriculturists in other parts of India would not rise for a long time' (*JAR* 1919, pt. iv, 75-76). In a Press statement dated 17 April 1918, Gandhi said among other things, 'There is no mistaking the fact that India is waking up from its long sleep. The ryots do not need to be literate to appreciate their rights and duties. They have but to realize their invulnerable power and no Government, however strong, can stand against their will. The Kaira ryots are solving an imperial problem of the first magnitude in India. They will show that it is impossible to govern men without their consent . . . this struggle is not for suspension 'of land revenue only, but it involves the interests of thirty crores of people . . . This is a struggle for self-government' (*ibid.*, 78-79).

What happened afterwards is best related in the words of C. Sankaran Nair, Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council. He wrote an appendix on Kaira to his note of dissent with regard to the proposed reforms in which it was said, 'The

Government rent or revenue was not paid. Properties, including household utensils, milch cows, were attached paid orders for forfeiture of lands were issued by Government and all possible steps were taken by the Revenue officials to 'enforce payment of revenue . . . the Commissioner himself called a meeting of all the ryots and . . . (told) them not to heed their advisers, the Home Rulers, who themselves will not suffer in person for the consequences of non-payment of revenue. But the ryots persisted in their attempt. Meetings were held in various parts of India expressing their sympathy with the movement. The Government regarded it as a contest between themselves and the Home Rulers. Every form of pressure was applied, but the resistance of the people stiffened. The village headmen also turned against the Government . . . On the 25th of April the Government suspended the collection of revenue by ordering that only those who were in a position to pay the revenue need do so, and the rest might do it nsxt year' (ibid., 85-86).

Victory of a kind was thus registered ; but Gandhi was not satisfied with the results. In his *Autobiography* he has recorded that 'the people had already become exhausted, and he hesitated to let the unbending to be driven to utter ruin'. The Governmental decision therefore came as a welcome relief. But although 'the poor were to be granted suspension, hardly any got the benefit of it. It was the people's right to determine who was poor, but they could not exercise the right' (Gandhi 1940, 537).

(c) *Ahmedabad* \*

While the satyagraha in Kaira was in full operation, Gandhi became involved in a labour dispute in Ahmedabad under rather exceptional circumstances.

While in Bombay in connexion with Kaira, he met Ambalal Sarabhai, one of the textile magnates of Ahmedabad, This was on 2 February 1918. The latter told him about the strained relation between employer and employed in

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\*See Gandhi 1940, 521-522, 526-530 ; Desai 1951 ; Soman 1957 233-248.

Ahmedabad. 'Labourers had been receiving for some time past a bonus amounting to between 70 and 80% of their wages. There was a rumour that this would be discontinued ; and labourers had become restive. On 11 February 1918, again, the Collector of Ahmedabad asked for a meeting with Gandhi in order 'to understand the real situation'. If the report of Gandhi's secretary, Mahadev Desai, is correct, it appears that he decided to 'take measures to prevent developments which might endanger the peace of the city of Ahmedabad' (Desai 1951, 4-5).

As usual, Gandhi proceeded to Ahmedabad, and after detailed investigation decided that the labourers' demand of 50% was not as justifiable as 35%, below which it could not be reduced any further. After strenuous endeavour, he persuaded the labourers to bring down their demand, and also take a vow that they would stand by it in a civil manner whatever the consequences. A board of arbitration was also set up with the co-operation of the mill-owners in which both interests were represented. The representatives on behalf of labour were Gandhi, Shankerlal Banker and Vallabhbhai Patel.

In the meanwhile, a few labourers had gone on strike. This was wrong, as arbitration had already been agreed to, and no decision had yet been arrived at. Consequently, Gandhi tendered an apology on their behalf and persuaded the strikers to withdraw. The mill-owners, however, promptly utilized the strike as an excuse for cancellation of arbitration. They staged a lock-out ; and in consequence, the fight became more intensified. After 18 days, the lock-out was lifted and employers offered a bonus of 20% to those who would return.

Every evening, Gandhi used to meet the labourers at a place near his residence. Daily bulletins were issued, read out and discussed. He tried to keep the labourers firm in their resolve, while supplementary sources of earning were also explored. But this could not naturally be enough for all. Some began to waver ; and one day a co-worker of Gandhi was twitted by a few labourers who said, 'Gandhiji and Anasuyabehn move in a car, eat sumptuous food, but we are suffering death agonies. Attending meetings does not prevent

starvation' (Desai 1951, 24-25). The news stung Gandhi to the quick and he decided to undertake a fast, ostensibly in order to keep the labourers 'firm in their vow'. In his *Autobiography*, however, he has recorded a significant question in regard to this fast. 'Was it pride or was it my love for the labourers and my passionate regard for truth that was at the back of this feeling,—who can say ?' (Gandhi 1940, 526).

In any case, the result was that emotions were deeply stirred. Labourers re-affirmed their pledge ; mill-owners felt thoroughly uneasy, and some justifiably cast sarcastic aspersions upon Gandhi for the manner in which he had turned public resentment against them.

Eventually, however, arbitration was restored ; and the fast came to an end. The new arbitrator upheld the demand of the labourers ; this was given effect to, and everyone felt happy.

An analysis of the Ahmedabad mill-strike and the part played by Gandhi in it leads one to about the same conclusion as in the case of Champaran, namely, that in a non-violent organization of the masses, *very much* seems to depend upon the quality of the officer or officers in command. If they stick to the battlefield, their example becomes contagious. But the Ahmedabad case leads to another observation also. When the crisis reached serious proportions, it was almost the adoration of the leader *as a person* which somehow stemmed defeat. One can, of course, argue that this is also true of war of the ordinary kind, particularly when an army is confronted by an extremely critical situation. But we must recognize that there is also a difference.

In war, one General may succeed another and yet carry on the battle with inflexible determination. But even when in a critical battle, the highest moral and intellectual qualities of the commanding officer are called for, the *operations* are still carried on by soldiers in company with their commander. They share the responsibility of either victory or defeat in loyal companionship with the officer who comes *nearer and nearer* to them, and becomes their 'loved' one, in a sense.

In contrast, there is a feature in, at least, these early campaigns of Gandhi's political career in India, which seemed to make matters move in a different direction. In a critical situation, as at Ahmedabad, when he undertook a fast which proved to be the decisive action, too much seemed to depend upon him singularly. He gained immensely in moral stature and popular reverence as a consequence. The whole of India became concerned about his life; but by that very act he became a little *distant* from those on whose behalf the supreme step had been undertaken. Whatever might be the anticipated results in the more distant future, the immediate effect was to build up a one-man army, while the rest found themselves in possession of a secondary role in the battle.

In other words, in the Ahmedabad strike, there were signs of a possible drift towards a concentration of moral authority. The worship of Gandhi increased. And this might also be regarded as a left-handed manner in which his lieutenants perhaps tried to say that what was possible for *him* was not possible for others. We may presume that this was exactly the opposite of what Gandhi actually desired. We shall see later on how he took specific steps for its prevention, and how such steps were sometimes successful and sometimes unsuccessful.

One may perhaps be pardoned for noting at this stage that the organization of collective non-violence becomes a complicated and delicate process. The drift towards moral authoritarianism has to be prevented; while operations have also to be preserved from perpetually moving in the direction of 'personal' action, or the joint action of 'perfect' or 'near-perfect' individuals. Such an eventuality may become necessary at specific moments of a campaign. But the progressive involvement of the masses has to be maintained in tact. On the other hand, the movement may keep true to the principles of non-violence; but may also slide into impatient outbursts of violence. And when this happens, the supreme problem becomes one of controlling the expressions of violence, and yet maintaining the active and enthusiastic character of the non-violent campaign.



### The Triple Demand

One of the features which appears from an analysis of the three cases cited above is that, in each, Gandhi tried to operate on a ground where there was already a strong sense of 'felt wrong'. And in India there was no dearth of situations of that kind in which experiments in the organization of non-violence could be undertaken. The Non-co-operation Movement of 1921-22 is itself an example of this kind.

#### (a) *Rowlatt Act*

It began with about the end of the first world war. Under alien rule, India had participated as best it could to promote the cause of the Allies. And it had been the hope and expectation of political leaders that a substantial measure of representative government would be granted as a result of post-war reconstruction (see Williams 1917-1918, 25, 28-67). In spite of being an avowed pacifist, Gandhi had put in his weight in a recruiting campaign which nearly ruined his health. He still believed that, in spite of proved limitations, the British Empire was still an important instrument of progress for India, and a citizen had to perform his duties rightly in fair weather and foul if he wanted to enjoy the full rights of citizenship (Gandhi 1940, 540 ff.).

On 20 August 1917, the Secretary of State for India made an announcement that the policy of the British Government was to promote 'progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire' (Williams 1917-1918, 36). This created mixed feelings. Some political parties were jubilant, while others were more cautious, and reacted by a demand for the early recognition of India's right of self-determination.

Even while the war was in progress, an order dated 10th December 1917 had been passed and the Sedition Committee 1918 set up under the chairmanship of Justice S. A. T. Rowlatt. The Committee submitted its report on 15 April 1918 in which it was concluded that India was infested by dangerous anarchistic revolutionaries; and existing laws were inadequate for coping with the situation. As a result, two Bills were placed before the Indian Legislative Council; and

subsequently passed with the Governor-General's consent on 21 March 1919, inspite of strong opposition in the Council from representative Indians like Srinivas Sastri or Madan Mohan Malaviya. Indian public opinion was completely flouted ( Jayakar 1958, 271-274 ). Gandhi, on his own part as a private citizen, addressed personal letters to the Viceroy and issued statements in the Press, and eventually decided to take the extreme step of satyagraha immediately on the eve of the date on which the Bills were to become law (Gandhi 1940, 558-563).

On 28 February 1919, he issued a statement to the Press in accompaniment with the Satyagraha Pledge (*Punjab* 1920, 25-26). As it might not be possible for existing institutions to adopt satyagraha, 'a separate body called the Satyagraha Sabha was established' at his instance. The pledge was signed by many ; bulletins were issued and meetings held. But, for one reason or another, it was Gandhi's feeling that 'there was not likely to be much chance of agreement between myself and the intelligentsia composing the Sabha'. Yet Gandhi's hope was that the response would be favourable in provinces like Bombay, Madras, Bihar and Sindh (Gandhi 1940, 562). But, actually, the hartal with which satyagraha was initiated was observed in an unexpectedly successful manner all over the country.

In a number of places like Delhi or Bombay, the Police either made armed charges for dispersing peaceful processions, or resorted to firing. Crowds became more and more restive ; and there was hardly any means of bringing order and discipline, which are the keystones of satyagraha. Then at Nadiad in Gujarat, the thought flashed upon Gandhi that it had been wrong for him to permit people to undertake civil disobedience *even before they had qualified themselves* by a course of strenuous discipline of obedience to laws or to voluntary institutions. This error on his part was designated by him as a 'Himalayan miscalculation' ; and the movement was forthwith withdrawn.

**(b) Punjab**

In the meanwhile, tragic things had happened in the Punjab. The province had been placed under martial law ;

many innocent people had been shot dead and the living deliberately subjected to a kind of humiliation, completely unworthy of any civilized government.

When the news gradually leaked out, in spite of strong censor, the whole country was convulsed with an intense feeling of revulsion and agony. When the British Government recognized the gravity of the situation, they set up an enquiry committee which submitted a report, popularly known as the Hunter Report. In the meanwhile, the Indian National Congress also initiated an enquiry whose report was submitted on 20 February 1920 over the signatures of M. K. Gandhi, C. R. Das, Abbas Tayabji and M. R. Jayakar (*Punjab* 1920). In an autobiography, Jayakar has described how Gandhi tried to keep everything within the strictest bounds of truth, and how he persuaded his Fellow-Commissioners to maintain the demands of justice completely untainted by any desire for retribution (Jayakar 1958, 319-325).

And yet the perfectly fair and legitimate demands of the Indian National Congress were disregarded. As a result, the Punjab wrongs were added to the national demands as a justification for nation-wide satyagraha.

### (c) *Khilafat*

It is curious how the Khilafat 'wrongs' which were limited to the brotherhood of Islam, came to be mixed up with the history of Indian nationalism.

As understood by Muslim divines of unimpeachable authority, the meaning of Khilafat is as follows. At the Gaya Conference of the Jamiat-ul-ulema on 24 December 1922, it was stated authoritatively by the Chairman of the Reception Committee 'that all Moslem States such as Turkey, Afghanistan, Persia, Bokhara, Khiva, Arabia and Iraq should owe allegiance to the Khalifa who would grant them all internal autonomy and could control the foreign policy of all such Muslim States, so that in time of war the forces of all these States may muster to defend Islam' (IAR 1923, I, 938).\*

\*An interesting question was raised in 1921. It was reported that Muhammad Ali had said in a speech in Erode on 2 April 1921 that

In the conception of the Khilafat, religious and temporal authority are inextricably combined. The Hon. G. M. Bhurgri, President of the All-India Khilafat Conference in 1920, pointed out that the 'control of the Jazirat-ul-Arab and the custody of the Holy Places were amongst the most sacred and precious rights of the Muslim world'; and these were now in jeopardy as a result of Allied victory (*JAR* 1921, 159. See also the Khilafat Manifesto in *ibid.*, 161-162; particularly, *JAR* 1924, I, 96 (b) ).

Clearly, the Muslim sect in India was convulsed by the treatment of Turkey, and the dismemberment of the Ottoman empire. The implication was that the loyalty of the Muslim sect to India was toned down by loyalty to the brotherhood of Islam across the frontiers of nation-states. And it is therefore important to examine how such a claim for extra-territorial loyalty came to be regarded as a part of India's 'national' demand. §

While the post-war agitation swept over the country and deeply affected the Indian National Congress, Tilak issued a Manifesto on behalf of the Congress-Democratic Party in which it was stated among other things that, 'This party supports the claim of the Muslims for the solution of the Khilaphat question according to Muslim dogmas, and beliefs and the tenets of the *Koran*' (Sitaramayya 1946, I, 194). On the contrary, in so far as Tilak's personal views were concerned, it has been recorded by one of his close co-workers, how he

'he would assist the Amir of Afghanistan if he marched towards India against those who (had) emasculated Islam and who were in wrongful possession of the Holy Places'. A storm of protest was lodged by Lala Lajpat Rai, Bipin Chandra Pal and others. Gandhi wrote an article entitled 'The Afghan Bogey' which was criticized by Pal and C. F. Andrews as an unwitting support of Pan-Islamism. See *JAR* 1922, 19, 169-170 and *Y I*, 4-5-1921, 138-139. In this connection, also see evidence of Sardar Mohammad Gul Khan quoted in the Presidential Address, All India Hindu Mahasabha in *JAR* 1925, I, 379-380.

§ When finally Turkey was secularized under Kemal Pasha in November 1922 and the Khalif forced to retire to Switzerland, Indian Muslims still continued to plead for the restoration of the monarchy or Khalifate. See the significant letter of the Aga Khan in this connection (*JAR* 1924, I, 85ff.).

'foresaw . . . . . the frightful consequences resulting from accepting the Khilafat dispute and he warned us all against it' (Jayakar 1958, 388. For Jayakar's personal views, see *ibid.*, 312).

In a series of lectures delivered shortly before the special session of the Congress was to be held in September 1920, Bipin Chandra Pal spoke on the Khilafat question thus, 'I identify myself with this movement not on sentimental grounds but for high political reasons . . . . . the future and freedom of the Indian nation depend almost entirely upon the preservation of the integrity and the independence of the Turkish Empire.' His fear was that if Turkey went, Persia and Afghanistan would succumb to the expansion of 'Christian influence. That is a danger to Asia . . . . . that is a danger to India' (Pal 1920, 98-99).

Gandhi's own position is defined in an article published in the *Young India* of 1 June 1921. In it he said, 'It was only when I found that the Mussalman claim was just from every point of view, that I plunged myself into it. For me it was a chance of a life-time. I felt that if I could but show my loyalty to my Mussalman countrymen in the hour of their trial, I would be able to secure everlasting friendship between the two communities' (p. 173). Three weeks later, he wrote in an important article entitled 'The Turkish question', 'Let Hindus not be frightened by Pan-Islamism. It is not—it need not be—anti-India or anti-Hindu. Mussalmans must wish well to every Mussalman state and even assist any such state, if it is undeservedly in peril' (*YI*, 29-6-1921, 204).

Let us remember in this connection that Indian nationalism before Gandhi, had already recognized the right of the Muslim sect to be treated as a separate political community, because that sect felt that its 'religious and cultural interests' could only be preserved in tact by special guarantees. Gandhi was responsible for carrying this to the logical extreme when he sympathized with them in their extra-territorial loyalty. Tilak and Pal's qualified support may have been for strategic reasons of one kind ; Gandhi's was also a strategic reason of another kind.

**Non-co-operation : Preliminaries**

Gandhi's real participation in the Congress dates from the Amritsar Session of 1919. After the withdrawal of the Rowlatt Act Satyagraha he became more closely involved in the Congress organization itself. In the meanwhile, after the withdrawal of the Rowlatt Act. Satyagraha, he tried to educate the whole country in the technique and requirements of satyagraha. This was done by means of extensive lecture tours, and through two weekly newspapers, *Young India* and *Navajivan* (in Gujarati), of which he became the editor.

Tilak died on 1 August 1920 ; and, according to Jayakar, this 'removed from Indian politics the main and principal opponent of Gandhi's non-co-operation movement' (Jayakar 1958, 388). The special session of the Congress was in Calcutta in September 1930. At the Congress, Jayakar himself spoke as follows. 'Throughout the whole period spread over 35 sittings, this Congress has preached co-operation with Government, you cannot reverse this process by sudden changes adopted at a single sitting . . . . . I warn those, in all friendliness, who claim to be followers of Gandhi and to have imbibed his spirit of Non-violent Non-Co-operation to remember that the ascetic discipline and self-control which have characterised Gandhi's life can only be the outcome of many years of effort and training' (Jayakar 1958, 396).

In spite of it, what happened is best stated in Jayakar's own words ; ' . . . . . leading men including the President, Lajpatrai, were opposed to the programme and against rushing it through at the Congress. But Gandhi won by the sheer force of his personality and argument, and what made success possible was, in some cases, the general loyalty to Gandhi and the obdurate policy of the Government which left practically no alternative' (ibid., 402).

The programme sponsored by Gandhi consisted of (a) surrender of titles, etc., (b) refusal to attend Government functions, (c) withdrawal of children from educational institutions connected with Government, (d) gradual boycott of courts, (e) refusal of the military, etc. to serve in Mesopotamia, (f) a complete boycott of the Reformed Council and (g) boycott of foreign goods.

The normal annual session of the Congress was held in Nagpur in the last week of December 1920. And although the Non-co-operation Resolution was passed after being proposed by C. R. Das himself, who had hitherto been in opposition, after all the amendments had been withdrawn (see IAR 1921, part III, 179-183), the President, C. Vijayaraghavachariar, said in course of his address that it was wrong to boycott educational institutions and courts of law. In a cautious voice, he said, 'Taking these two items together I venture to think that I shall be justified in asking you to consider whether any appreciable success of the movement which I humbly deny can ever be reached does not mean an unintentional and even unconscious proposal to rebarbarise the people of India, by no means a very auspicious preparation to establish and maintain the democratical form of responsible government which we all have so dear at heart' (IAR 1921, part III, 143).

Yet there was justification why a no-tax campaign was not immediately proposed, and only a mild form of action was suggested. That was incorporated in the N. C. O. Resolution in the Special Session in Calcutta (ibid., part III, 107). In his *Young India*, Gandhi also explained the reason fully as follows. He wrote, 'The progress of the nation cannot be arrested by any person or class. The uneducated artisans, the women, the men in the street are taking their share in the movement. The appeal to the educated classes paved the way for them. The goats had to be sifted from the sheep. The educated classes had to be put upon their trial. The beginning had to be made by and through them' (YI, 20.4-1921, 153).

'We have been trying to act on the masses from the commencement. We regard them as our mainstay, for it is they who have to attain Swaraj. It is neither the sole concern of the monied men nor that of the educated class. Both must subserve their interest in any scheme of Swaraj, and as soon as the masses have attained sufficient self-control and learnt mass discipline, we shall not hesitate if necessary to advise them to suspend payment of taxes' (ibid., 124).\*

\* See also *Selections*, nos. 367-372.

**Non-co-operation Movement 1921-22\***

The die was thus cast. It will be our purpose now to watch the developments from 1921 onwards. For a chronicle of events the reader is referred to *The Indian Annual Register* from 1920 onwards. We shall here pass in swift review some of the salient and politically significant developments which took place during those years.

Gandhi's entry into the Congress was signalized by a change in its constitution. In the Nagpur Session (1920), the object was declared to be the 'attainment of Swaraj by peaceful and legitimate means'. Organizational changes of a sweeping nature were introduced. India became divided into 21 Congress Provinces on the basis of language; for it was Gandhi's firm belief that the common people had to participate actively in the organization. And this would be possible if proceedings were carried out, at the provincial level, in the spoken language, and at the All-India level in Hindustani (IAR 1922, 353b ff.).

The movement itself was initiated by a number of spectacular *hartals*, or suspension of normal business voluntarily undertaken. One such was in connection with the Duke of Connaught's tour when he came to initiate the Reforms, which were formally inaugurated on 9 February 1921 (Williams 1922, 46). But the royal tour was marked everywhere by public hartals, nothing like which had ever been witnessed hitherto by either the Government or the politically advanced classes. The masses seemed to be stirring. They seemed to have captured the initiative in their own hands; while the educated tried to keep pace with them, and the Government were thrown on the defensive in their effort to maintain law and order.

The Prince of Wales was sent to India on a kind of conciliatory visit; and the cleavage between different politically advanced classes became sharply accentuated on the occasion. The Prince landed in Bombay on 17 November 1921, when widespread disturbances broke out as the 'masses' tried

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\* For an excellent summary see the *Report of the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee* in IAR 1922, 49-169; also 171-183.



to enforce the boycott upon loyal sections of the population who wanted to welcome the Prince. Five Europeans and Parsis were killed, some wounded, while among the rioters, 53 were killed and 298 wounded, largely by gunfire.\*

The disturbances were witnessed by Gandhi, who went on a fast in order to bring it under control.

In the meanwhile, Hindu-Muslim riots broke out at Kolar in June 1921; and far worse things began to happen in Malabar. The Muslim Moplahs rose in revolt, and tried to establish 'Khilafat Raj'. Khilafat flags were hoisted in Police Stations; and the worst feature was that the mob turned against the local Hindus because they were Hindus. Barbarous atrocities were perpetrated; but what is politically significant is that the Moplahs entertained the idea that they were re-establishing Muslim rule, when, as they thought, British rule had come to an end. Operations against the Moplahs were carried on until 22 February 1922 when Martial Law and extra troops were withdrawn. During the rising, approximately 4000 Moplahs lost their lives and many thousands were wounded (JAR 1922, 186-88; also see Nair 1922, 96ff. and 130-142).

Apart from these frenzied mob-outbursts, there were other phases in the awakening of the masses, to which attention should now be drawn. Although the educated classes had been, more or less lukewarm in their intellectual support, the student world seems to have been deeply stirred. This was particularly true of Bengal, where attempts were made to establish 'national' educational organizations. Banaras and Aligarh were also chosen for the establishment of such institutions; but as the latter lacked efficiency and the country was swept by a flood of political activity, there was hardly time for anyone to settle down to the quiet work of educational reconstruction.

In the meanwhile, peasants and labourers had also begun to wake up from their slumber. They were becoming self-conscious and assertive. Organized movements occurred in

\* For a comprehensive list see Nair 1922, 218-251. Also see Jayakar 1958, 464-470.

many places, some of which tried to keep true to the discipline of non-violence, while others bordered on violence.

Among movements of the first order, one may refer to Mulshipeta (*IAR* 1922, 144 g and Jayakar 1958, I, 456-462 ; also occasional references in *Young India*), the Union Board Boycott Movement in Midnapur (files of the local weekly in Bengali, *Nihar*), and the remarkable beginnings of the Gurudwara Movement in the Punjab (for its later phase, see *Gurukabagh* 1924). Among other popular movements which also did not slide into violence, but in which the masses were subjected to repression, and eventually may be said to have lost the battle, may be mentioned the Assam coolie exodus and the railway strike at Chandpur (*IAR* 1922, 144j, 144p), Chirala Perala exodus (Rao 1922), and the coolie strike in the Kidderpore docks in Calcutta in December 1921.

At Malegaon, again, there were serious disturbances in 1920 in the wake of the Khilafat agitation (Nair 1922, 38-42 ; also *IAR* 1922, 144c), peasant risings in Barabanki (Nair 1922, 161-163), Bareilly in January-March 1921, and in the Giridih coalfields in April 1921 (*IAR* 1922, 144f).

The masses were thus becoming restive in various parts of the country. And in order to prevent their energy from running to waste, it was decided at the next session of the Congress at Bezwada to prepare the country for civil disobedience on a mass scale. The programme was to intensify preparation by raising a crore of rupees, enlisting a crore of members, and introducing two million spinning wheels in order to make the boycott of foreign cloth effective by organizing production of textiles at the village level.

A fairly large section of the educated classes were carried away by enthusiasm. The masses were on the move on all sides ; great things were happening because the movement had virtually turned into a war of national self-assertion. As a result, even when the educated were not quite convinced about the correctness or otherwise of the details of a programme as decided by Gandhi, in most cases they laid aside their doubts and hesitations and determined to work as soldiers in battle. It was not for them to question the commander in the midst of action.

Some have ascribed this 'blind' obedience of the 'dupes' of Gandhi (Nair 1922) to the overwhelming character of his personality. It has been suggested also that India worships the ascetic; and by their subservience to Gandhi the educated Indian was giving expression to India's traditional homage to the sannyasin (Majumdar 1961, 40 ff.). But a different explanation is also possible for the observed 'subservience'.

Up till now, the educated classes had tried to assert their intellectual and cultural independence against Western domination in a kind of comparative isolation. The masses had hardly given them support except on spectacular occasions of short duration. So the actual political attainments had been meagre. But now, the car of Juggernaut was on the move. The tide swept away many; for it is good to swim in a stream even if it is muddy. Moreover, the direction which was being given to the muddy flow by Gandhi earned the consent of most nationalists, even when they did not see sufficiently far ahead, or did not agree with the commander in so far as the later reaches of the journey were concerned.

In the meanwhile, Gandhi clearly recognized the rising tide of mass unrest as it expressed itself in a leaning towards violence. The fire, he felt, was alight; but there was too much smoke. The smoke was disturbing, and rendered the fire ineffectual; but it was proof that the fire burnt within. And in order to harness the fire for an effective purpose, he decided to launch upon a quick step in a local civil disobedience, under conditions subject to his control. If this experiment succeeded, it would serve as a model for the rest of India to follow. And thus he came to choose Bardoli as his ideal battlefield.

Bardoli had gone through the prescribed discipline of non-violence; necessary precautions were now taken (see *IAR* 1922, 302-305), and the All-India Congress Committee authorized initiation of a no-tax campaign in its sitting of 30 January 1922. Other parts of the country waited anxiously in suspense; some fretted at the harness, and places like Guntur prayed for permission to join the battle if the Congress satisfied itself that their preparations had also been adequate.

Some however foresaw the possible dangers of the impending mass civil disobedience. And one among the greatest of India's national leaders, namely, Madan Mohan Malaviya, made a last-minute attempt to bring about a settlement between the Congress and Government by means of a round-table conference. A preparatory conference was held on 14 January 1922 in which Gandhi was also present (see *JAR* 1922, 160-293 ; Jayakar 1958, I, 504ff. and *YI* 1922, 33-35).

The attempt at holding the round-table conference was by-passed, in a way, by Gandhi himself. He addressed a letter to the Viceroy on 1 February 1922, intimating the decision about the proposed no-tax campaign. The Government sent a reply to the effect that Gandhi was responsible for leading the whole country towards anarchy. 'Mass Civil Disobedience is fraught with such danger to the State that it must be met with sternness and severity' (*JAR* 1922, 295-297).

Immediately after, there was an outbreak of mob violence in Chauri Chaura when 22 police constables were killed. When news reached Gandhi, he swiftly changed his plans and, in spite of strong opposition, persuaded the Working Committee of the Congress to pass the famous Bardoli Resolution withdrawing civil disobedience on a mass scale (*JAR* 1922, 307-315). Gandhi issued a remarkable statement, which need only be referred to here. The All-India Congress Committee met shortly after on 24 February 1922 at Delhi, and endorsed the Working Committee's recommendation. Mass civil disobedience was suspended for the time being ; but the right of individual civil disobedience remained. The people of India were advised to concentrate upon constructive work for the present.

The Government were however not sure that the modification was to be taken as an assurance of abstention. So, they also acted swiftly. Gandhi was arrested on 10 March 1922, tried and convicted to six years of rigorous imprisonment.

The Government apparently regained the initiative which had been lost since 1919.

### **Political Trends during Non-co-operation**

It is now necessary to review some of the developments

which had been taking place in the political sphere of the country. Educated and uneducated, Hindu and Muslim, Liberal and Nationalist, reacted differently. And it would be useful to try to discern how these numerous currents were distinguishable from one another ; for that is likely to throw light upon events which happened in India afterwards.

(a) *Muslim and Hindu*

Even within the tangle of the crowded happenings of 1919-1922, one can discern clearly one broad element of difference between the Muslim and non-Muslim divisions of the Indian population.

Educated Muslims had spurned Western education on the consolidation of English rule. But after the Aligarh Movement, and the earlier Wahabi Movement, they had tried to re-assert their cultural individuality while, at the same time, accepting a measured movement towards Westernism. This had been before the first world war. But after that war, when a concern for the Khilafat was shared by even Nationalist India, the masses entered the arena, and educated Muslims tried to consolidate their position still further as a distinct and separate community.

Certain interests which were not very significant in everyday life, suddenly assumed magnified proportions, because they marked the *distinctness* of the Muslims from their other neighbours. Such was the right to sacrifice cows, the demand for stoppage of music before mosques at all hours, the supreme sanctity of any place chosen for worship by Muslims, and so on.\*

These were elevated from the plane of civic to political demands. For in order to preserve these cultural rights, the leaders of the Muslim sect demanded special representation in all democratic organizations, ranging from Councils to local boards and along with it, also a proportion in services, etc. etc.

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\* See Gandhi's Presidential Address at Belgaum in which he said, 'Trifles have been dignified by the name of religious tenets which the fanatics claim, must be observed at any cost. Economic and political causes have been brought into play for the sake of some trifling trouble' (IAR 1924, II, 407).

beyond what they thought was justified by their numerical strength. Otherwise, they would not feel safe where the Hindus were in an overwhelming majority (or 'in brute majority' as one of the later leaders of the sect worded it).

The point is that Muslims, even as a result of the Khilafat movement, became more firmly Muslim, and drifted away, as a whole, from an attempt to contribute to the making of an Indian nationhood.

In contrast to Muslims, who were thus drifting towards a form of cultural nationalism,\* the Hindus tended to become less and less 'nationalistic' in one sense. One heard less about the glories of ancient India, as in the days of the Swadeshi Movement and its cultural sequel. One heard instead more of peasants' demands, of the demands of labour for better terms, of the right of the public to manage religious institutions in a democratic manner, of the demand to utilize such funds for purposes of education or social service, of the right of untouchables to be treated equally, of cottage industries, and the need of planned economic development of India in order to prevent concentration of power, and so on. In other words, while the Hindu population did not become more firmly entrenched in its Hinduism, it tended to become more and more democratic in orientation, and perhaps also more secular and less religious than before.

One cultural result noticeable from even the days of Non-co-operation was that, although as a reaction to Muslim communal consolidation, Hindus became more temple-minded, or more mindful about public religious festivals, the festivals themselves became progressively shorn of their religious connotation, and were utilized as excuses for public organization of a voluntary character. This is, however, a feature of cultural development into which it is not necessary to enter any further in the present context.

\*Cf. an interesting article 'Islam in Modern Bengal' by Benoy Gopal Ray in *The Visvabharati Quarterly*, vol. 21, no. 1, 1955, pp. 58-89. Also the important book, *Modern Islam in India* by Wilfred Cantwell Smith, 2nd ed. 1947. Ripon Printing Press, Lahore.

(b) *Educated and Uneducated*

The cleavage between the masses and the educated classes became however a little more clearly defined as a result of the Non-co-operation movement. This happened on account of two very contrary reasons.

One was that some realized during the actual progress of the movement how blind obedience to authority usurped the position of reason, and how also hatred against the West tried to camouflage itself under the garb of patriotism. The strongest and noblest warning in this respect was sounded by the Poet, Rabindranath Tagore. In inimitable words he pleaded with his countrymen not to lower the values for which the greatest of Indian thinkers had stood in the past, even if narrowness brought immediate returns in the present. Gandhi read the words of caution with reverence ; and in an article entitled 'The Great Sentinel', begged to differ from the Poet in that he did not find evidence of either the hatred or the inertia to which reference had been made (See *Tagore—Gandhi Correspondence*, 36-115).

In a life of Mahatma Gandhi written by Romain Rolland, there is a remarkable comparison between the two spirits of Tagore and Gandhi ; and we would refer the reader to the book for a magnificent picture of those stirring times (Rolland 1924, particularly 140-183).

But there was also another, and a less noble, reason why some of the educated classes recoiled from the teachings of Gandhi. C. Sankaran Nair held that the Gandhian movement was frankly out to destroy all the benefits of science, as well as of representative government. Gandhi was against all government and stood for destruction pure and simple. One of his observations was, 'The Gandhi movement will no doubt collapse by internal disruption as it is composed of various elements, drawn from Tolstoy Lenin communism, socialism, Rigid Brahmanism, militant Mahomedanism mutually repellant and explosive when they come into contact with one another and fanatics'. In the opinion of C. Sankaran Nair, the masses of India (Nair 1924, 10) be slowly and painfully educated into a sense of their

political rights ; enfranchised from the inertia in which their mind was steeped ; and this was very much the duty of Western-educated people of the right kind.

This distrust of the masses was also in a way evident in the minds of some of Gandhi's close and respected colleagues like M. R. Jayakar, for instance. When Gandhi drafted the ultimatum to the Viceroy on the eve of the no-tax campaign at Bardoli, he was in constant communication with Jayakar. To one of his letters, Jayakar sent a reply on 1 February 1922, of which a part is quoted below.

'I must say with great respect to you that judged by the high test to which you often mercilessly subject your utterances, this memorable document, which you have written to the Viceroy, is sadly deficient. Heaven alone knows what the consequences will be. You know my strong sentiments against mass civil disobedience and this is no place for repeating them. I wish you all success in your awful venture. But I do hope that, at the last moment, it may be made possible to turn away by offering you the price which you stipulated the last time we met here' (Jayakar 1958, 554. Also see p. 359).

It must be clearly understood, however, that in spite of this kind of distrust of the masses, leaders like C. Sankaran Nair or M. R. Jayakar were not a whit smaller as 'nationalists' on that account. Indeed, they were ardent advocates of nationalism, but failed to subscribe to the view that true freedom would only come 'not by the acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when abused'; this being the position held by Gandhi (*Selections*, no. 334).

It was at this point that the educated classes, as a whole, differed from Gandhi who also firmly subscribed to the view that successful violence only tended to concentrate power in a few hands, while it was only possible through non-violence to disseminate power among the masses. Educated people did not disbelieve in a violent overthrow of British rule, if that were practicable. And they had too much faith in their own goodness to hold that they would not eventually share power with the masses, if they once gained it through the means of either constitutional agitation or militant nationalism.



(c) *Swarajya Party vs. No-changers*

Reference has already been made to the fear expressed by the President of the Nagpur session of the Congress who felt that, through the boycott of educational and judicial institutions, India was perhaps unconsciously drifting towards barbarism. Similar, and even stronger opinions were expressed in relation to khadi or the programme of the spinning wheel so enthusiastically propagated by Gandhi.

In the presidential address of C. R. Das at the next session in Gaya in 1922, there was a plea for the revision of the N. C. O. programme and its intensification in certain directions. Das also made a very significant remark which brought out clearly the difference between his views as a nationalist and those held by Gandhi. He said, 'I confess that I am not in favour of the restrictions which have been put upon the practical adoption of any system of civil disobedience, and in my opinion, the Congress should abolish those restrictions. I have not yet been able to understand why to enable a people to civilly disobey particular laws, it should be necessary that at least 80 per cent of them should be clad in pure 'khadi'. I am not much in favour of general Mass Civil Disobedience. To my mind, the idea is impracticable. But the disobedience of particular laws which are eminently unlawful, laws which are the creatures of 'Law and Order', laws which are alike an outrage on humanity and an insult to God—disobedience of such laws is within the range of practical politics and in my opinion, every attempt should be made to offer disobedience to such laws' (JAR 1923, 335).

In the year 1922, Congressmen gradually became divided into two camps, one favouring a change of programme and the other favouring the programme of Gandhi which they wanted to carry out in spite of lack of popular enthusiasm in that respect. The former came to be known later on as the Swarajya Party (later Swaraj Party), while the latter earned the appellation of 'No-changers'.

<sup>Trials</sup> fanaticism. Permission to contest elections for the Reformed Council causes granted by the Congress of 1923, and a split was thereby (JAR 1924) effected. In the elections, Congress wrested away many seats

from the Liberals, who had almost been in monopolistic enjoyment of seats in Assemblies and Councils ; and political enthusiasm was revived all over the country.

One of the most important after-effects of this entry into the Assembly was that a new Hindu-Muslim Pact was forged for Bengal in which the moving spirit was C. R. Das himself. The Bengal Pact was signed in Calcutta on 17 December 1923. As an ardent nationalist who wanted to strengthen the forces against Government in the Assembly, Das felt it necessary to placate the feelings of the Muslim sect in Bengal. But it is noteworthy that the interests which were involved were less connected with the religion of Islam than with the temporal interests of the adherents of that religion ; and more particularly of the educated upper and middle sections of that population. In terms of the Pact, the fate of the Muslim masses was likely to remain no different from that of similar classes belonging to other religious denominations.

A few items from the Bengal Pact are quoted below, while the resolution on religious toleration is left out as unnecessary in the present context.

‘Be it resolved that

**(a) Representation in Council**

‘Representation in the Bengal Legislative Council be on the population basis with separate electorates subject to such adjustment as may be necessary by the All-India-Hindu-Muslim Pact and by the Khilafat and the Congress.

**(b) Representation in Local Bodies**

‘Representation to local bodies to be in the proportion of 60 to 40 (this may be further considered) in every district—60 to the community which is in the majority, and 40 to the minority . . .

**(c) Government Posts**

‘55 per cent of the Government posts should go to the Mahomedans to be worked out in the following manner :—

‘Fixing of test of different classes of appointments. The Mahomedans satisfying the least test should be preferred till the above percentage is attained , and after that according to

the proportion of 55 to 45, the former to the Mahomedans and the latter to the non-Mahomedans, subject to this that for the intervening years a small percentage of posts, say 20 per cent, should go to the Hindus' (*IAR* 1924, I, 63-64).

It is also relevant to draw attention to the economic policy of the Swarajya Party as expressed in its Manifesto issued by the General Secretary, Motilal Nehru, on 14 October 1923. That also shows a difference with the ideal of workman's freedom or Swaraj, which Gandhi tried to popularize.

The Manifesto stated that 'the agriculturist of India needs no assurance of the unswerving loyalty of the Swarajya Party to his cause . . . . . True it is that the Party stands for justice to the tenant but poor indeed will be the quality of that justice if it involves any injustice to the landlord. The Party believes that it is only by serving the true interests of both that it can find a solid base for Swarajya and is pledged to stand by the one as firmly as by the other in its hour of need' (*IAR* 1924, I, 60-61).

The position taken by Gandhi himself in respect of the Swarajya Party is of great significance. He still commanded an overwhelming majority among Congress members. Yet, he refused to suppress the strongly-held opinions of others by means of numerical advantage. There should be room for them as much as for others in the national organization, which the Congress was. But in the meanwhile he tried to plead with them and convert them to his own definition of 'Swaraj' (*YI*, 15-10-1925, 352). In a statement issued in the middle of the summer of 1924, he recognized that although there was difference between him and the Swarajya Party on fundamental issues, yet the latter 'were justified in entering the legislative bodies and expecting perfect neutrality on the part of the "no-changers"' (*Sitaramayya* 1946, I, 269-271 and also see Nehru—*Das Statement* on p. 271-274).

In the succeeding Congress at Belgaum in 1924, Gandhi was elected President. There, he came forward with a proposal that membership to the Congress was to be on the basis of labour-franchise, the labour being represented by a stipulated

measure of cotton yarn spun by the member. 'The qualification for the franchise should be neither property nor position but manual work, such, for example, as suggested for the Congress franchise. Literary or property test has proved to be elusive. Manual work gives an opportunity to all who wish to take part in the government and the well-being of the State (IAR 1924, II, 409 ; also see 394-397).

Gandhi's idea was thus to introduce into the Congress labourers in their own right. But somehow this was vigorously opposed by the politically oriented educated classes. A compromise of a kind was arrived at between Das, Nehru and Gandhi on this score ; but this was a concession prompted by personal respect for the 'Mahatma'.

Outside the Congress, opinion hardened still more among the educated classes who were interested in politics. Gandhi's position in respect of social reform activities, as well as his insistence on non-violence as the only means of the attainment of freedom were vigorously attacked in the presidential speech of the Maharashtra Provincial Conference on 11 May 1925 (IAR 1925, I, 390 ff.). Gandhi was aware of this cleavage and sometimes gave expression to his sentiments with a tinge of sorrow. Thus on 6 August 1925, he wrote in *Young India*, 'If I could carry educated India with me I would declare Non-co-operation in its entirety today' (p. 271. Also see important article entitled 'About Educated Classes' *ibid.*, p. 352).

The polarization between the 'educated classes' of Gandhi and those who tried to identify themselves with the interest of the masses through his 'Constructive Programme' thus became sharpened to some extent. But Gandhi would never allow it to develop in a fashion which might cause injury to the national organization itself. 'I have too great a regard for the Congress,' he wrote, 'to do without it.' 'It is the one institution that has weathered many a breeze fair or foul. It is the fruit of years of patient labour given to it by educated India. I shall wilfully do nothing to decrease its usefulness' (YI, 20-8-1925, 288).\*

\*See particularly Gandhi's statement at the A.I.C.C. meeting in Belgaum on 23 December 1924 in IAR 1924, II, 394-396 and article on 'Shall we Unite ?' in *Young India* of 27 November 1924, pp. 387-388.

In a significant article published in *Young India* on 30 July 1925, he wrote again, 'if educated Indians concentrated on the triple constructive programme and made it their predominant occupation we should be nearer Swaraj. But I confess that I have failed to carry that conviction home. I must, therefore, no longer stand in the way of the Congress being developed and guided by educated Indians rather than by one like myself who has thrown in his lot entirely with the masses, and who has fundamental differences with the mind of educated India as a body. I still want to act upon them, but not by leading the Congress ; on the contrary, by working my way to their hearts silently so far as possible, even as I did between 1915 and 1919. I recognize the great service rendered to the country by educated India in the face of tremendous odds. It has got its own method of work ; it has its own place in the national life. I cannot be blind to the fact that, no matter what may be said to the contrary, the disciplined resistance of the Swaraj Party has made its impression upon the rulers. The best way in which I can help that activity is by removing myself out of the way and by concentrating myself solely upon constructive work with the help of the Congress and in its name and that too only in so far as educated Indians will permit me to do so' (p. 264).

This was then the relation between Gandhi and the Congress as it stood in 1925.

### **Period of Clarification & Consolidation**

The period which led to a growing distinction between Pro-changers and No-changers in the Congress was marked also by several political developments in the country which should be treated separately.

#### **(a) All-India Spinners' Association**

After failure at Belgaum to have manual labour accepted as the only qualification for franchise, Gandhi proposed in a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee in September 1925 that an All-India Spinners' Association be formed out of the All-India Khaddar Board which had been in operation since 1921. Its object would be 'to help or establish schools or

institutions where hand-spinning (is) taught . . . to act as agency on behalf of the Congress, to receive self-spun yarn as subscription to the Congress . . . .’ He also explained that the Association ‘would be able to enhance the prestige of the Congress . . . . It was in no way formed in a spirit of hostility to the Congress. It was not formed with the idea of capturing the Congress . . . (and) would purely be an economic body looking after the economical side of the country’ (IAR 1925, II, 27-28, 25).

In the opinion of Jawaharlal Nehru, the yarn franchise had failed ; for the total number of members who had accepted the rule was only 9,197. It was therefore necessary not to limit the franchise but extend it, so that people of many shades of opinion might be encouraged to accept membership of the Congress as before (ibid., 25).

Although the yarn franchise subsequently became modified, there was considerable progress in the work of the All-India Spinners’ Association, as was indicated in the annual reports presented by the General Secretaries of the Indian National Congress (see, for instance, IAR 1926, II, 28-30 ; IAR 1928, II, 18 ; IAR 1929, II, 252).

#### (b) *Minor satyagrahas*

Congressmen who had accepted the Gandhian programme did not however confine themselves exclusively to the khadi programme. Satyagraha was launched in several parts of India for the remedy of specific wrongs ; and the years 1923 to 1928 are marked by some very important campaigns of this character.

Among these were the Sikh movement for reform of the Gurudwaras, a measure which had already been initiated during the height of the Non-co-operation movement in 1921, but now reached considerable proportions. The massacre at Jaito took place in February 1924, and it helped to intensify the determination of the Sikhs instead of abating it in any manner (IAR 1924, I, 97 and II, 19 ; also *Guru-ka-Bagh* 1924). Vaikom in Kerala became another seat of an important satyagraha for the vindication of the civic rights of ‘untouchable castes’ (IAR 1924, II, 19 and VI, 1924, pp. 124, 133, 144, 201, 221, 306). The

satyagraha at Mulshipeta in Maharashtra continued among the peasantry who tried to resist forced evacuation from land (IAR 1924, II, 19) ; while a new one was undertaken in 1924-25 at Tarakeswar in Bengal against the oppression of the head of a religious establishment.\* Nagpur became the seat of the Flag Satyagraha in 1923 ; while a movement was launched in 1927 in Madras for removal of a statue of General Neill which contained an insulting inscription. Patuakhali witnessed another in 1926, in which the civic rights of the population were involved in opposition to certain privileges demanded by the Muslim sect.

Besides these well-known and reported cases, there were also several in different parts of the country whose study is likely to yield very important results. Such were the peasant movement against a zemindar in Brikutsa in Rajshahi ; boycott of Union Board at Bandabila in Jessore, and a similar boycott proposed by the Muslim peasantry of Patuakhali in Barisal after the termination of the Patuakhali satyagraha.

It is interesting that in most of these satyagraha movements, it was the Hindu population which was generally involved. In 1919-21, they were more or less unfamiliar with Gandhi's demands or the discipline of non-violence. So when he called upon them during that period to join the hartal, they responded, but without discrimination whether their reaction was violent or non-violent. But now they knew better ; Gandhi's fast had chastened them, or at least made them watch their steps. So that, even if they did not subscribe to the feelings towards the opponent which he recommended, they tried to keep within the bounds of non-violence, and to control every manifestation of violence.

The numerous small satyagrahas may therefore be looked upon as exercises in the practice of non-violence, so far as the whole of India was concerned. Of course, some of them

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\*See Ghoshal 1340 B S ; Sanyal 1342 B. S., and Bandopadhyay, 1355 B.S For Nagpur see IAR 1927. II. 169-172 ; for Patuakhali, see IAR 1926, II, 109-112 and IAR 1927, 78-80 ; for Neill Statue, see IAR 1927, II, 38, 337.

showed up better than others. And it is remarkable that the best examples of courage and determination came from the Punjab, particularly from among the Sikh who had proved themselves in war to be among the best soldiers of India.

It is also noteworthy that the satyagrahas listed above were not for the promotion of any specifically religious interest. Even in cases where religious institutions were involved, the cause was frequently of a secular character, like the demand for democratic management of endowments. So that, such satyagrahas did not leave the participants more firmly entrenched in orthodoxy than before. On the contrary, the satyagrahis gained in experience and quality as soldiers who might later on engage in combat wherever it occurred, provided the cause was just and the means non-violent.

One important question may naturally arise here. If peasants and common people thus began to assert themselves among Hindus, what happened to the same classes belonging to the Muslim sect ? It is difficult to answer the question without detailed investigation in satyagrahas in areas where the Muslim sect was in a preponderance. One additional difficulty of such an enquiry is that records were, in most cases, not maintained. Yet it is possible to recover part of the history from interviews with workers actually involved, provided they are helped to present their case objectively.

One such satyagraha may be briefly described here. At Brikutsa in Rajshahi, there was a rising of peasants who mostly belonged to the Muslim sect against a zemindar who happened to be Hindu. The peasants were united and withheld payment to the zemindar. The Government came to the aid of the latter ; and most of the important Congress members who had initiated the struggle, were imprisoned. They were Hindu. In the meanwhile, new Government officers were posted in the area ; and care was taken to send tactful and experienced Muslim officers in place of Hindu.

The officers met the peasants in their homes and in the mosque, and their wives also made friends with the peasant women. When sufficient popularity had been gained, the peasants were advised not to pay any heed to



Congressmen, but acquaint Government officers with their difficulties. When the peasantry were impressed, the Government took swift steps in order to meet all the demands which the Congressmen had helped them in formulating. The result was that the peasantry did not gain the feeling that they had fought their way to victory. Instead, the feeling gained ground that everything had happened through the generosity and sympathy of officers who represented the Government.

Another case of nearly the same kind took place in Barisal after successful termination of the Patuakhali satyagraha. Satin Sen, a prominent Hindu Congressman, had been at the head of the latter campaign, which had resulted in a restoration of the right of citizens to carry processions with music before mosques during hours not marked off for prayer.

It is interesting that shortly after Patuakhali, there was a proposal by the Government to introduce Union Boards in the district. Muslim peasants, who resented the introduction and who had also heard of the successful Union Board boycott in Midnapur in 1921, approached Satin Sen and invited him to lead their campaign. Sen accepted the invitation, went on a visit to the area concerned. As soon as this became known, the Magistrate of Barisal had the order about Union Board withdrawn at once. To allow Congressmen (Hindus generally) to consolidate their position among Muslim peasantry would be disastrous in the opinion of the Government, as well as of Muslims belonging to the upper classes, whose strength as a separate community depended upon the support of the Muslim commoners.

### (c) *Muslim reorganization*

It has already been indicated that the Muslim sect was being gradually organized into a separate 'nationality' in India. One of the principal means of doing so lay in sedulously nursing a feeling of injury and oppression by the majority community.

During the period between 1923 and about 1928, when the Simon Commission visited India for an enquiry prior to fresh constitutional reforms, the Muslim sect, as a whole, was

guided progressively to concentrate upon two demands. These related to cow-sacrifice and the playing of music before mosques. It was also urged that the Hindus were not only numerically strong in India, but they were also economically the dominant community. This overlooked divisions between rich and poor within the Hindu fold completely.

One immediate result was that hatred and anger were turned against the Hindu as Hindu, and not against the rich as rich. And if all the growing passion of the Muslim masses could be thus organized in an endeavour to build up a Muslim 'nationalism', it offered a prospect and shelter to the Muslim rich to be treated as 'brother' by the Muslim poor, while the latter turned their wrath against the Hindu poor, even when the latter were in the same condition as their fellow peasants belonging to the Muslim sect.

Let us describe some of the happenings during the period under review, as well as watch the results in the political field.

In 1924, there were serious riots between Hindus and Muslims in Delhi, Gulbarga, Lucknow, Shahjahanpur, Allahabad, Calcutta and Kohat. This was followed in the following years by a chain of similar occurrences in which the issues involved were cow-killing by Muslims in public places, or the demand of stoppage of music at all hours in the presence of mosques, suddhi, sangathan or the right of proselytization exercised by Hindu sects like the Arya Samaj in respect of Muslims, and so on.

A substantial number of nationalists, who looked upon the interests of India as their common interests, and who belonged to both Hindu and Muslim persuasions, tried to stem the tide of separation by means of pacts or unity conferences. One unity conference was held in Delhi after a fast undertaken by Gandhi, on 2 September 1924; another in Simla on 16 September 1927; a third one in Calcutta on 27 October 1927. But it is significant that the issues raised remained at the level of cow-protection, music before mosques, suddhi and tablig; all of which tended to sharpen differences instead of emphasizing similarities at the economic and

political level across boundaries of religious persuasion (see *IAR* 1924, II, 149ff. ; *IAR* 1927, II, 39-58 ; particularly 'Hindu—Muslim Tension : its Cause and Cure' by Gandhi in *YI*, 29-5-1924, 173-183).

It was with reference to the Kohat riot in 1924 that a serious difference of opinion manifested itself between Gandhi and Shaukat Ali who had been his co-worker since the Khilafat movement. The interested reader may refer to their separate findings with respect to this riot (*IAR* 1925, 97-106). But what is of importance in the context of political differentiation is a significant observation made by the latter in the statement referred to above.

Shaukat Ali said, 'The ignorant and less educated Khans of the Frontier Province have a high regard for dignity and position . . . . The more clever and better educated Hindu commands a position now, thanks to his thrift and business capacity. He has amassed a fortune and at times shows it aggressively . . . . Government officials, although they were anxious not to allow the Hindus to grow in strength, were taking special advantage of the situation to further emasculate and weaken the Muslim gentry . . . .

' . . . . The Musalmans in the Frontier Province are little better than slaves and they want the whole of nationalistic India to come to their assistance and get for them the same rights as the rest of India. They want representatives in elective institutions like the Councils, Municipalities, District Boards, Universities etc.'

At the All-Parties Conference held in January 1925, M. A. Jinnah is reported to have said, 'The dispute between the Hindus and Mahomedans, particularly with regard to their representation in the various legislatures and other elective bodies and with regard to their share in the services, was a question which had been a terrible monster in the way of the country's progress . . . . without removing this terrible obstacle they could not make any progress in any direction' (*IAR* 1925, I, 68).

In other words, the riots were utilized as a lever for wresting a heavier representation of the upper classes in

economic affairs than was justified by numbers, while the demand of being treated as a separate community, marked off by cultural and religious distinctions, went hand in hand with it. One may be permitted to remark that distinctions between literate and illiterate, propertied and property-less classes were progressively camouflaged under this consolidation in terms of a cultural nationalism.

In the meanwhile, the latter order of differentiation began to manifest itself in a more pronounced manner as the history of subsequent decades tend to show. But we shall, for the present, confine ourselves to a development which was already taking place within the Congress organization itself.

(d) *Swaraj Party & Party of Responsive Co-operation*

After Gandhi's virtual abdication in 1924, the Secretaries of the Congress reported in 1925 that 'from (being) a body mainly doing constructive and nation-building work, it has again become a predominantly political organisation and the constructive work has been largely delegated to other and more specialised organisations' (*IAR* 1925, II, 19). The A. I. C. C. at its meeting held in Patna on 22 September 1925 had already resolved that 'the Congress do now take up and carry on all such political work as may be in the interest of the country' and provided that 'the work in connection with the Indian and Provincial Legislatures shall be carried on in accordance with the policy and programme laid down by the Swaraj Party . . . subject to such modifications made by the Congress as may be found necessary from time to time for the purpose of carrying out the said policy' (*IAR* 1926, II, 17),

The Swaraj Party's political programme thus became the whole political programme of the Congress. But divisions began to appear even within the Party itself as a result of work. The Swaraj Party claimed to carry on obstructionist tactics within the Legislature. But in actual practice, some members slowly leaned towards official responsibilities offered by the Government (see particularly Malaviya's move in Cawnpur and sequel in *IAR* 1925, 333-340).

There was already a significant wing within the Congress, particularly represented by Maharashtra, which had uniformly

been opposed to the desultory tactic of obstruction. They had always favoured co-operation if suitable conditions presented themselves. The body was known as the Responsive Co-operation Party, and included men like Jayakar, Aney, Kelkar, Moonje and others.

Gradually differences between 'Swarajists' and 'Responsivists' became accentuated and finally led to the withdrawal of Responsivists from the Congress organization (IAR 1926, I, 33, 43, 46, 51, 94 ; also Jayakar) 1959, ch. 7).

In these days, Congress politics came closer to what the Liberals or Moderates or Mrs. Besant's National Home Rule League stood for ; but with one difference. Swarajists enjoyed the good will and strength of the organization, a strength which had been built up by the masses, whose revolt had constantly been under the guidance and control of Gandhi and his non-violence. Yet, the interests which the Swaraj Party represented were not materially different, excepting in the fact that while the Liberals did not favour a breach with the British Empire, the Swarajists were prepared to do so, if necessary. They would not be unhappy if full Dominion Status were accorded to India.

#### (e) *Trade Unionism & The Left*

In spite of communal riots and a drift towards cultural nationalism, small satyagrahas became fairly popular, in which non-communal interests were principally represented. Besides this, another feature also began to appear at the same time in the political horizon of India. This was the rise of Leftism.

We shall begin with an observation made by the President of The Republican Congress in its first session on 28 December 1927 in Madras. The President, Jawaharlal Nehru, said, 'Since the failure of the non-co-operation movement the Congress had been drifting to middle class or Babu politics and was losing the support of the masses . . . . It was important . . . . to form some kind of organisation which would keep the National Congress up to the mark and also prepare the country not only in a Republican ideal, but also in a right Republican ideal' (IAR 1927, II, 348).

Labour disputes and strikes were becoming increasingly frequent ; but these did not yet seem to yield a distinguishable political harvest. Trade unions and trade union congresses, begun in 1921, became a regular feature ; but they failed to influence Congress leaders sufficiently, although some of them like Lala Lajpat Rai participated in their personal capacity in these movements. The same observation might be made with respect to the Conference of Indian Communists who held their first session in Kanpur on 26 December 1925.

In spite of a kind of retirement, Gandhi's advice was still called for in every political emergency. So, even when his creed of non-violence had not been found acceptable, and the political conscience of the Congress had been placed in the keeping of the Swaraj Party, yet when it came to a vital issue like trade unionism, or a conflict between employer and employed, reference was still made to Gandhi, so that he continued to be a force which could not be disregarded in the political field.

Sapurji Saklatvala was a Member of the British Parliament, and an ardent Communist. A series of letters passed between him and Gandhi on the question of labour organization in India. These letters are available in the *Indian Annual Register* (IAR 1927, I, 65ff. and II, 117ff.), and they were also collected and published in the form of a pamphlet under the title, *Is India Different ?*, by the Communist Party of Great Britain.

In these letters, Gandhi tried to defend the case of non-violence, and also the organization of the masses through decentralized production in cottage homes operating under the principle of co-operation. The letters need not be referred to any further, except by drawing attention to the endeavour still made by Gandhi to prepare the country for a non-violent struggle in which power would eventually reside in the masses who would become politically conscious in course of the struggle.

He had already worked with and in the Congress, led the Non-co-operation movement and then retired for marshalling the non-violent economic strength of the masses. The Congress

had progressively drifted away in aims and methods towards Liberalism. Personally, Gandhi had never spurned such aims ; only, they had not been his own. And yet, as far as his kind of non-violent preparation was necessary before the battle could be renewed once more, there was no sign yet anywhere on the horizon. The country was clearly not ready for it.

*(f) Nehru Report and After*

The British Government established the Indian Statutory Commission under the chairmanship of Sir John Simon in order to report upon the possibility of further constitutional reforms in India. Most political parties decided to boycott the Commission. An All-Parties Conference was also constituted on 19 May 1928, and leaders of various shades of opinion were entrusted with the task of 'considering and determining the principles of the Constitution of India'. The Chairman was Motilal Nehru, and the members were Tej Bahadur Sapru, Ali Imam, Pradhan, Shuaib Qureshi, Subhas Chandra Bose, Madhavrao Aney, M. R. Jayakar, N. M. Joshi and Mangal Singh.

The Nehru Report was discussed at a Conference in Lucknow in August 1928, and again in the All-Parties Convention in Calcutta in December 1928. In both places, it was evident that there were serious differences of opinion between different parties; yet all had tried to accommodate one another to the utmost in order to present an agreed solution.

Muslim separatism was now firmly entrenched ; and its shadow was now cast over other sections of the population. Youth showed signs of drifting away either to the Left or to a negation of non-violence, which was with Gandhi, a creed, but with the Congress, a temporary policy.

Three pieces of evidence will be cited in support of the above observation.

(i) While there was an effort within the Nehru Committee to accommodate as far as practicable the claim of Muslims to special representation, Muhammad Ali represented a strong section of Muslim opinion which had now become frankly proponent of an aggressive Pan-Islamism.

Presiding over the All-India Khilafat Conference in December 1928, he said, 'God made men and the Devil made nations . . . . God made Islam to link mankind in one family, and one community . . . . I want Hindus, Christians, Jews, and stone-worshippers—all to come and unite with me in one life and joint brotherhood, to come and join in embrace without coercion, compulsion, force and subterfuge and without such false propaganda which is to-day taking place in favour of the Nehru Report' (IAR 1928, II, 403).

(ii) Liberal opinion was expressed by the President of The National Liberal Federation, Sir Chimanal Setalvad, at Allahabad on 30 December 1928 as follows: 'The Nehru Committee in its Report has attempted to solve . . . . the communal problem. The question has assumed fictitious importance, far beyond its real merits. The principal communities concerned in this question are the Hindu and Muslim communities. The separatist principle was first recognised in 1909 and it was confirmed by the Lucknow Pact in 1916 . . . The Hindu and Mussalman leaders who were parties to this pact entered into it in the full hope that separate electorates would last only for some time and were to be confined only to the legislatures. They accepted separate electorates only as a means of dealing with a temporary aberration which was expected to vanish on the growth of national unity. Unfortunately, however, the separatist idea has spread like a wild weed. It has extended to the municipalities, and local boards, and has invaded in some places even the seats of learning. It has infected other communities and sections, Europeans, Anglo-Indians, Sikhs, Non-Brahmins, depressed classes and others too numerous to mention. It has unfortunately extended to the region of public offices to such a degree that fitness, efficiency and the needs of the State are no longer the principal considerations, with the inevitable result that the public services show a decline which must, in its turn, weaken and debase the national character' (IAR 1928, II, 387).

(iii) The first All-India Socialistic Youth Congress was held in Calcutta on 27 December 1928 under the chairmanship



of Jawaharlal Nehru. Several resolutions were passed, one of which is given below.

'In the opinion of this Congress complete Independence and not Dominion Status is the immediate political objective of India not as an ideal but as the necessary preliminary to a communistic society and rejects altogether the Nehru Committee Report for the following among other principles, viz. :—

'That it allows the bourgeoisie to compromise with the British Imperialists by establishing the so-called Dominion Status which involves the safeguard of the vested interests, landowning, feudal and capitalist, and sacrifice the interests of the masses' (IAR 1928, II, 454).

Gandhi gave a kind of qualified support to the Nehru Report ; and it is interesting that this occasioned a controversy with a celebrated European pacifist, B. de Ligt. The latter read about his support and wrote to Gandhi a letter which was published in the *Young India* of 30 January 1930. De Ligt said, 'My objections are directed against your collaboration in the preparation of a national Indian State, organised on the same lines as the Western States. It seems to us, that in acting, in quite a different manner from Tolstoi, you put too much confidence in measures of bourgeois policy . . . . That status of Dominion, to the realisation of which you are today devoting all your strength, is a political institution which will inevitably be used against the great masses of the population of your own country by the dominant Indian classes, which will become more and more allied with the dominant foreign classes . . . . As soon as your country begins to arm, it becomes immediately dependent upon international capital for munitions, and upon the great foreign banks ; as soon as it begins to develop its industry, your ruling class immediately calls upon financial powers outside the country, which inevitably will place heavy chains about the neck of your own people . . . . As for us, we refuse, in all cases, to prepare or to employ any engines of war . . . . Strictly speaking, we prefer even to lose our national independence— independence which, moreover, is today becoming more and

more fictitious,—rather than maintain it by such means' (YI, 30-1-1930, 33).

### Developments in 1930

As issues thus became clarified and consolidated, signs arose in the horizon which threw a challenge of action before Gandhi and those who believed with him in civil disobedience.

Trade disputes, firstly, became frequent in 1928 and 1929. Jamshedpur was already in the grip of one such dispute, while serious conflicts developed in the Bombay textile industry and in the railway workshops at Lillooah and Bamungachhi near Calcutta.

In addition, militant nationalism continued to assert itself more aggressively in different parts of the country. Already in 1924, the rift had appeared clearly enough to Gandhi on the occasion of a resolution in the All-India Congress Committee.

A young revolutionary named Gopinath Saha had killed an Englishman and had been hanged after trial. At the Ahmedabad meeting of the A. I. C. C., a resolution in praise of his patriotism was proposed, and it was with reference to that meeting that Gandhi wrote an article entitled 'Defeated and Humbled'. He said, 'I had a bare majority always for the four resolutions. But it must be regarded by me as a minority . . . . The Gopinath Saha resolution clinched the issue. The speeches, the result and the scenes I witnessed after, was a perfect eye-opener. I undoubtedly regard the voting as a triumph for Mr. Das although he was apparently defeated by eight votes. That he could find 70 supporters out of 148 who voted had a deep significance for me. It lighted the darkness though very dimly as yet' (YI, 3-7-1924, 217).

As the country drifted subsequently in the direction of communalism, and as efforts to patch up a settlement in order to present the British with a united front consistently failed, this particular force became more and more insurgent. Sometimes it allied itself with Hindu revivalism and sometimes leaned towards Westernism and the Left.

During the widespread demonstration against the Simon Commission, Lala Lajpat Rai was severely assaulted by the Police in Lahore on 30 October 1928. As a result, he died on 17 November 1928. A month after this event, on 16 December, a police officer named I. P. Saunders was shot dead by revolutionaries in the city. An attempt was also made to wreck a train in which the Viceroy was travelling ; and bombs were later thrown into the Chamber of the Legislative Assembly in Delhi on 8 April 1929.

The Lahore Conspiracy case and Saunders Murder case (see IAR 1929, II, 25-27) showed the extent to which discontent had spread ; and it was also an indication of the political direction in which the youth of the country became progressively oriented. The Meerut Conspiracy case which began in May 1929, was the first in which Communists, as a group, became involved in India. In September 1929, again, a revolutionary named Jatin Das, died in gaol as a result of prolonged fasting. When his body was received in Calcutta, there was a procession, the like of which had not been witnessed except on one occasion when the body of C. R. Das had been carried in procession after his death in 1925.

These were challenging symptoms for Gandhi who had practically kept himself away from active politics since the rise of the Swaraj Party. But now youth seemed to have grown sick of Congress politics, in which there was hardly any revolutionary fervour left. The silent adoration displayed by the masses for martyrdom was no less important as an indicator of the prevailing temper. Non-violence, with its exaggerated reliance upon the symbolism of the spinning wheel, seemed to have a feeble attraction for politically directed minds.

It was in the Lahore session of the Congress in 1930 that the Congress eventually decided to accept complete independence as its goal, instead of *Swaraj* which had been interpreted in several different ways. The resolution was moved by Gandhi himself ; while an amendment proposed by Subhas Chandra Bose suggesting that immediate preparation be made for the establishment of parallel government and the launching of a campaign of civil disobedience was not found

acceptable (JAR 1929, II, 302). Gandhi explained that the organization was not yet ready for such a step and the country had to move with caution, rather than be swayed by immediate needs of action.

The original resolution was passed ; and in order to give effect to it, Gandhi was placed once more at the helm of affairs. Here was an opportunity of organizing a non-violent campaign, for the temper of the nation seemed to be ready for it. And so he decided to initiate civil disobedience by a dramatic breach of the Salt Law. This was a law which affected rich and poor, Hindu and Muslim, without distinction; and, for many years, Gandhi had considered taxation of one of the vital needs like salt to be an immoral law.

In planning the campaign, Gandhi was swayed by several considerations which were strategically important. It is therefore necessary to pay particular attention to the arguments which moved him in designing the campaign. During the Non-co-operation movement, he had been deflected from his path by the violence of the 'masses'. Instinctively he had recoiled when news about Chauri Chaura reached him. Later on, he had defended the retreat by explaining that this became necessary because 'Congress and Khilafat men were implicated in the Chauri Chaura outrage' (*Selections*, nos. 630, 631). On the present occasion, there was chance of an outburst of mass violence. But his hope was that the masses now knew better about the demands which he made upon them. Moreover, there was an additional reason, which can best be stated in his own language.

'There is', he said, 'undoubtedly a party of violence in the country. It is growing in strength . . . I have in mind that secret, silent persisting band of young men and even women who want to see the country free at any cost . . . They will listen to no argument. . . unless they are convinced that there is a programme before the country which requires at least as much sacrifice as the tallest among them is prepared to make' (YI, 23-1-1930, 28). In other words, the manifestation of militant nationalism had appeared to him as a challenge to his non-violence. 'Hatred and ill-will there

undoubtedly are in the air. They are bound sooner or later to burst into acts of fury if not anticipated in time' (ibid., 29). 'Civil disobedience is a sovereign remedy of transmuting this undisciplined life-destroying latent energy into disciplined life-saving energy whose use ensures absolute success' (YI, 27-3-1930, 108).

Along with this, he also began to feel that he was 'absolutely certain now that the campaign had been long overdue. (He) might have started it long before . . ' (YI, 20-3-1930, 99).

Quite clearly, Gandhi's strategy now was to embark upon a campaign immediately with selected volunteers so as to give a tangible demonstration of courageous collective non-violent action. That would serve as a model for action elsewhere ; and would at the same time serve as a means of sterilizing the forces of violence.

The breach of the Salt Law began on 12 March 1930 when Gandhi started on a 241-mile trek from Sabarmati towards the sea with a band of 79 associates. Careful preparations were made all over India for breach of this law, as well as of ordinances prohibiting peaceful procession or peaceful picketting of shops dealing in liquor or in foreign cloth. The whole of India watched with bated breath ; and when the signal was given by Gandhi's symbolic breach of the Salt Law on the seashore on 6 April 1930, the whole country plunged into the campaign with unexampled enthusiasm.\*

The success was phenomenal. There was hardly any breach of discipline, and altogether, during the duration of the campaign, nearly a lakh of people suffered imprisonment, while during Non-co-operation, it had been of the order of 30,000.

An important feature of the Salt satyagraha was an audacious step designed by Gandhi during the later stages of the campaign. When the Government had almost settled down into the routine programme of imprisoning volunteers,

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\*For details see Sitaramayya, I, 362ff, Tendulkar, III, 1-218 and IAR 1930, I, 81-160 Also see assessment by Pramathanath Mukhopadhyaya in IAR 1930, I, 55-80 (b).

or of man-handling them and a kind of stalemate seemed to have overtaken the satyagrahis, Gandhi altered his tactics. In order to invite the Government to do its worst, he designed 'non-violent raids' on the salt godowns of Dharasana and Wadala (see *JAR* 1930, I, 112-119). The invitation to the Government was now, not merely to imprison, but also to shoot.

Placed under these circumstances, the Government did not actually shoot, but took measures to beat off the advancing satyagrahis. Shooting satyagrahis who were unarmed, and in the sight of numerous European newspapermen who came to witness the strange scene, would have lowered their reputation considerably. And this is something which they were careful to avoid. But where conditions could be controlled by military censor, there was no dearth of situations where British soldiers did not hesitate to shoot straight with the intention to kill.

One of the singular features of the campaign was that in spite of the consolidation of Muslim 'nationalism', a new force came into being among the peasantry of the North-West Frontier Province. The rural population here is almost wholly Muslim, and accustomed for centuries to the law of vendetta and to internecine feuds. It was from among these warlike Pathans that one of their chieftains, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, tried to forge a body of volunteers disciplined in the technique of non-violence. They were known as Khudai-Khidmatgar. They participated in the campaign by picketting liquor shops strictly in accordance with rules. But the military opened fire in which between two to three hundred people lost their lives, and the district of Peshawar was subjected for some time to military rule.

Yet, the movement continued ; and the campaign was marked by numerous examples of courage and restraint exercised by the country folk. One example can be quoted from the Report of the Peshawar Enquiry Committee. 'The beating that was given to Mohmad Naquib Khan, the Captain of Khudai Khidmatgars, is beyond description. His shirt was forcibly taken off but when he was ordered to take off his

trousers he dashed towards his house which was nearby to fetch a revolver to retaliate. But Rabnawaz Khan, the Commander, shouted, "Is your patience exhausted so soon that you are going to retaliate by violence? You swore to remain non-violent according to the Congress creed till death." At this he returned bareheaded and barefoot and without any shirt and was arrested' (*Peshawar* 1930, 40).\*

Similar examples of courage were also reported from Bengal, where peasants vied with one another in the display of dignified determination (see, for example, Bose 1958, 59-63).

The movement thus progressed until January 1931; and it is important that Liberal politicians issued several warnings to the Government, which had been trying to alter the direction of the movement by holding a Round Table Conference. In one very important statement of that kind, signed by Chimanlal Setalvad and Cowasji Jehangir (Junior), it was stated, 'The Government are evidently puzzled at the commercial and industrial classes joining and encouraging the civil disobedience movement. The open secret of it is that those classes have begun to despair of getting a fair treatment and encouragement under the present system of administration' (*IAR* 1930, I, 122).

Eventually, Gandhi and other members of the Congress Working Committee were released from prison in order to make it possible for the Congress to participate in the Conference to be held in London. A truce was signed; and Gandhi proceeded to England as the sole representative of the Congress. Politically, there was no gain. But Gandhi utilized the occasion for clearly voicing some of his radical ideas about the future political and economic constitution of India (see *Selections*, no. 325. Also cf. chapters vii to x). One might, however, wonder how far he was representing the opinion

\*Although British soldiers seemed to remain unmoved by demonstrations of courage, Indian soldiers belonging to the Garhwali regiment refused to open fire on unarmed processions. In consequence, they were court-martialled and suffered long terms of imprisonment.

held by the Congress officially, and how far he spoke about his own hopes and aspirations in this respect.

After return to India, the civil disobedience movement was resumed once more ; for, even during the progress of the Round Table Conference, the Government of India had not apparently revised their determination to preserve law and order instead of attempting to arrive at a suitable political settlement.

So Gandhi found himself once more in prison after a short spell of freedom. Satyagraha continued with some force from 1932 for nearly a period of two years ; after which its strength began to wane appreciably. The British Government announced certain measures of constitutional reform ; but these were attached to a Communal Award which sought to divide the Hindu population itself by means of separate representation granted to suppressed castes. The strategy was the same as had been applied in 1909 to the case of Hindu *versus* Muslim. And Gandhi who foresaw great danger ahead, immediately went on a fast while still in prison.

The fast was against his own countrymen, whom he invited to do away with the injustice meted out to suppressed castes, so that the Government would have no handle by which to divide Hindu from Hindu. National leaders from all over India became deeply moved ; and within record time, an agreement was arrived at between them so that eventually the Prime Minister of England had to withdraw his Award.

Gandhi was released on 8 May 1933 even before the expiry of his term of imprisonment. And when he was free once more, he reviewed the progress of the civil disobedience movement during the past four years. In course of a statement, he frankly confessed that the real reason why there was insistence on non-violence in the movement had not been appreciated by most political leaders who had worked with him. They were more interested in anyhow bringing British rule to an end ; but that had been only one of his minor objectives. The organization of the masses into power had been his principal aim instead. Evidently, therefore, the time



was not very distant when they would arrive at a parting of ways.

It was on 7 April 1934 that Gandhi eventually decided that civil disobedience should now be withdrawn. In the statement, he explained, 'I am in deadly earnest about this greatest of weapons at the disposal of mankind. It is claimed for Satyagraha that it is the complete substitute for violence or war. It is designed, therefore, to reach the heart of both the so-called Terrorists and of the rulers who seek to root out the Terrorists by emasculating the whole nation. But indifferent civil resistance of many, grand as it has been in its result, has not touched the hearts either of the Terrorists or of the rulers as a class. Unadulterated Satyagraha must touch the hearts of both . . . . I must advise all Congressmen to suspend Civil Resistance for Swaraj as distinguished from specific grievances. They should leave it to me alone. It should be resumed by others in my lifetime only under my direction, unless one arises claiming to know the science better than I do and inspires confidence' (IAR 1934, I, 264).

While Gandhi advised Congressmen who decided to work with him to devote themselves completely to 'nation-building activities' of which he was soon to accept fuller responsibility, his advice to others within the Congress was to proceed in accordance with their own conviction.

In a letter addressed to Dr. Ansari he said, 'I have no hesitation in welcoming the revival of the Swarajya Party and the decision of the meeting to take part in the forthcoming elections to the Assembly which you tell me is about to be dissolved.

'My views on the utility of the legislatures in the present state are well known. They remain on the whole what they were in 1920, but I feel that it is not only right but it is the duty of every Congressman who for some reason or other does not want to or cannot take part in the civil resistance and who has faith in entry into legislatures to seek entry and form combinations in order to prosecute the programme which he or they believe to be in the interests of the country. .

‘Consistently with my view above mentioned I shall be at the disposal of the Party at all times and render such assistance as it is in my power to give’ (IAR 1934, I, 262-263).

The Swarajya Party was revived ; and in the All-India Congress Committee meeting at Patna, where the Congress Parliamentary Board was formed, Gandhi tried to make his position clear in regard to non-violence. In his speech in the meeting on 18 May 1934, he said, ‘I have said from a thousand platforms to the school of violence that even if they succeeded in achieving Swaraj by taking the lives of some English and Indian officials, it would be Swaraj for themselves, but not for the masses of India . . . .

‘Civil Resistance is a complete substitute for violence. Through it every one has to achieve his own Swaraj. This weapon has given spirit and new strength to the masses . . .

‘I am an optimist and never give way to despair. My decision (regarding suspension of civil disobedience) is born of an unshakeable faith in non-violent resistance. It is surely for the General to decide the time and manner of action. The General has to be convinced of the soldiers’ capacity to act at a given moment. The conditions of service are to be laid down by the General and not by the soldiers and here you have a General who has no physical force at his command. He can only appeal to his soldiers’ reason and heart’ (IAR 1934, I, 288).

The announcement of severing his connection with the Congress was made on 17 September 1934, when Gandhi reiterated his difference with the intelligentsia, as he had once done in Belgaum in 1924 (*supra* 163 ff.). On this occasion, he said, ‘It has appeared to me that there is a growing and vital difference of outlook between many Congressmen and myself. I seem to be going in a direction just the opposite of what many of the most intellectual Congressmen would gladly and enthusiastically take, if they were not hampered by their unexampled loyalty to me. No leader can expect greater loyalty and devotion than I have received from these Congressmen, even when they have protested and signified their disapproval of the policies I have laid before the Congress. For

me, any more to draw upon this loyalty and devotion is to put undue strain upon them. Their loyalty cannot blind my eyes to what appears to me to be fundamental differences between the Congress, the intelligentsia and me' (Tendulkar 1952, vol. 3, 362).

### Constructive Activities

After formal retirement from the Congress in 1934, Gandhi's plan was to devote himself wholly to the 'Constructive Programme'. The All-India Village Industries Association was founded on the strength of a resolution of the Working Committee of the Congress during its meeting of 12 and 13 June 1934, when its purpose was stated to be village reconstruction of which 'decentralization must be the key note' (IAR 1934, II, 222). It was placed in charge of J. C. Kumarappa; and among those who were on the Board of Advisors, there were such names as Rabindranath Tagore, J. C. Bose, P. C. Roy, C. V. Raman, Professor Sam Higginbotham, Major General Sir Robert Macarrison and others.

In order to support whole-time constructive workers, a body was established under the name of Gandhi Seva Sangh which provided allowances according to personal needs, and also held annual meetings where experiences were shared and policies reviewed. It was incumbent upon members of the Sangh not to take part in 'active politics' but devote themselves wholly to the economic regeneration of the villages.

Anti-untouchability work was entrusted to a separate body entitled Harijan Sevak Sangh. Gandhi himself had already started a new English weekly, *Harijan*, in place of *Young India* which had ceased publication in 1932. The policy of the *Harijan* was not to publish 'political' articles, until there came about a revision in 1937 when the Congress accepted responsibility of administration in the provinces. Then these Governments were advised by Gandhi to share in the promotion of the 'constructive programme' itself. And from that time onwards, *Harijan* began to play the part that *Young India* had done of old.

### Congress and Elections

In spite of the fact that Gandhi had ceased to be an ordinary member of the Congress, his connection with the organization seemed to persist and even become more pronounced. He began to play the part of a mentor to the leaders of the institution. One of his first suggestions was to hold the annual session of the Congress no longer in towns but in villages. Accordingly, the session of 1936 was held in Faizpur in Maharashtra. \*

One of the important issues then was the coming election under the reforms introduced in 1935. There was also a proposal to convene a Constituent Assembly. While addressing an audience of about 60,000 people who had gathered at this Congress, Gandhi said, 'If (you) really want to . . . take the message of the Congress to the villages, (you) should take a vow to hold all future Congresses in the villages. The villages will also have to understand what you people who want to get Swaraj want them to do. The President (Jawaharlal Nehru) and the Socialists are saying that you merely sleep after paying four annas. The mere payment of four annas does not show that you are real Congressmen. Preparations for the Congress are not over in a day but they take a number of months. They have to go round and get things ready. This sort of connection that has been established should be continued all the year through . . . .

'The decision of a Constituent Assembly can be taken only when you have Swaraj at your door. You can call a Constituent Assembly when you have got full strength. It cannot meet in Delhi but in the remotest village. Swaraj can be got only by increasing our strength on all sides. If we increase that strength, we can see Swaraj coming soon. What I asked you to do in 1920 is still left unaccomplished today—charkha, prohibition, removal of untouchability. If you leave things unattended, take to your heart an old man saying it— if you do not carry out these you will have lost Swaraj' (IAR 1936; II, 231).

Evidently there was a tinge of sorrow and perhaps also of loneliness when Gandhi expressed these sentiments before

the national assembly. In any case, elections were contested and the Congress succeeded in securing a majority of seats in 6 out of 11 provinces (see *IAR* 1937, I, 168ff). Naturally, Congressmen were invited to form ministries. But they decided to ask for an assurance from Governors to the effect that the latter would not interfere with the working of the ministers so long as they kept within the four corners of the Constitution. There was a breeze over this both in India as well as in England. Eventually, a 'gentleman's agreement' was arrived at, and 'office was accepted' in six, and then in one more province by the end of June 1937.

There was considerable opposition within the Congress itself with regard to 'office-acceptance'. This came from Leftists like M. R. Masani and Jaiprakash Narain, as well as from a national leader of the stature of Madan Mohan Malaviya. At a meeting of the A. I. C. C. on 18 March 1937, Malaviya said, 'Any decision that might be taken by the house today would affect the future political life of the country . . . Closing down a few toddy shops and getting a few amenities for the people were not the objective of the Congress though they were necessities which ought to be looked into . . . During the recent election the electorates had been told why the Congress were getting into the legislatures and told in no uncertain terms the Act contained nothing which would benefit the country. The people of India had declared their determination that the Act should be rejected by sending Congressmen in large numbers to legislatures. Now it was for the Congress to enforce the will of the nation and not to think in terms of minor amenities. The Congress entered legislatures with a clearly defined objective and it was not for them now to discuss minor amenities to the people. Pandit Malaviya considered it a sin to accept office in the circumstances' (*IAR* 1937, I, 202.).

In defence, Rajendra Prasad explained at the same meeting of the A. I. C. C. that 'the Congress wanted to accept office only to get as much help as they could in attaining their object, namely, organising the country for the attainment of their objective . . . Those in favour of office acceptance were convinced that they would get many opportunities to strengthen the

country's cause' (IAR 1937, I, 192). In its final shape, the resolution as drafted in July 1937 stated, 'The Committee has . . . . come to the conclusion and resolves that Congressmen be permitted to accept office where they may be invited thereto. But it desires to make it clear that office is to be accepted and utilised for the purpose of working in accordance with the lines laid down in the Congress election manifesto and to further in every possible way the Congress *policy of combating the new Act on the one hand and of prosecuting the constructive programme on the other*' (IAR 1937, I, 216).\*

### Gandhi and Office-Acceptance

Up till now, Gandhi had virtually remained outside the public eye ; although one might guess that he played some important part from the fact that the critical meetings of the Congress executive were usually held in Wardha, and the supporters of the resolution were some of the ardent champions of Gandhism, known as No-changers of old. The only new recruit in the camp seems to have been the President, Jawaharlal Nehru, who had been an ardent advocate up till recently of socialism and an opponent of the general ideas underlying Gandhism.

In a statement issued on 30 March 1937, Gandhi however made his own position clear. He said, 'I feel I must give my opinion on the situation that has arisen in the country . . . . I have had three cables . . . shown to me asking for my opinion . . . Though it is a departure from my self-imposed rule, I can no longer withstand the pressure, especially as I am the sole author of the office-acceptance clause of the Congress resolution and the originator of the idea of attaching a condition to office acceptance . . . Congress policy was, and is, not to secure an amendment but an absolute ending of the constitution which nobody likes. Congressmen were and are also aware that they could not end it by mere acceptance of office, even conditional. The object of that section of the Congress which believed in office-acceptance was, pending the creation by means consistent with the Congress creed of non-violence of a situation that

\*Italics present author's.

would transfer all power to the people, to work in offices so as to strengthen the Congress which has been shown predominantly to represent mass opinion' (*IAR* 1937, I, 242).

It is interesting to study the argument by means of which Gandhi reconciled himself to his new position. In an article entitled 'Congress Ministries' in the *Harijan* of 17 June 1937, he said, 'The Government of India Act is universally regarded as wholly unsatisfactory for achieving India's freedom. But it is possible to construe it as an attempt, however limited and feeble, to replace the rule of the sword by the rule of the majority. The creation of the big electorate of three crores of men and women and the placing of wide powers in their hands cannot be described by any other name . . . ' (*H*, vol. v, 180).

Gandhi was evidently speaking here as a 'Constitutionalist', nearer to the Liberals whose stand was identical. And in taking this stand, Gandhi had moved as far away from Anarchism as possible. This elasticity of his stand made it possible for him to work together with adherents of different political views, so long as he considered that his fundamentals had not been compromised. Here was a situation in which his views were evidently that by implication.

Even while reconciling himself to office-acceptance, obviously Gandhi's hope was that it would be possible to prepare the ground for Swaraj through governmental machinery under conditions in which the Congress had been placed in power. There were several things which he wanted Congress governments particularly to achieve.

One was, to acquire the ability to rule without the aid of the police or military (see several important articles in *H*, vol. v, 'Congress Ministries', 180; 'The Fundamental Difference', *ibid.*, 188; 'Criticisms Answered', *ibid.*, 196; 'The Implications', *ibid.*, 220). In the article entitled 'The Implications' published in the *Harijan* of 21 August 1937, he concluded by saying, 'The best and the only effective way to wreck the existing Constitution is for the Congress to prove conclusively that it can rule without the aid of the military and with the least possible assistance of the police who may well have some new and friendly designation given to them.'.

Yet, as conflicts were likely to occur, he hoped that a large band of volunteers professing non-violence of the 'true' type would come forward and be able to cope with any emergency. In the meanwhile, the Congress ministries had to prove worthy by progressive reduction of their dependence on arms (see 'Our Failures' in *H*, vol. vi, 54; 'Need for Self-examination', *ibid.*, 64., and 'The Choice', *ibid.*, 72) But 'if they find that they cannot run the State without the use of the police and the military, it is the clearest possible sign, in terms of non-violence, that the Congress should give up office, and again wander in the wilderness in search of the Holy Grail' (*H*, vol. vi, 385).

The second hope was that, if ministers were to cope with their new responsibility, they had 'to discover the art of burning Red Tape. The old order could only live by and on Red Tape. It will strangle the new order.' His fear already was that 'they are so tied down to Red Tape that they have no time to think' (*H*, vol. vi, 385 in an article named 'Red Tape'). This condition had to be corrected for a particular reason: 'The millions . . . have been accustomed by Congressmen to think that immediately the Congress comes into power there won't be a hungry mouth in all India nor a naked person who wants to cover himself. The ministers have to give their time and thought to such problems, if they are to do justice to the trust they have undertaken' (*H*, vol. vi, 385).

Gandhi's third hope was that by the removal of untouchability and promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity, conditions would be created of social justice and equality. Gaols had to be reformed and converted into corrective and self-sufficient institutions. Prohibition was to be made possible by diverting revenue from excise into channels so that the root cause of drinking could be grappled with. Under British rule, education was financed by revenue derived from excise. This had to be stopped completely. Education could be universalized by centring it round some useful craft, so that children could meet a substantial portion of their educational expenses; particularly during the latter part of their career in school, (See *H*, vol. vi, 161 and *IAR* 1938, I, 18).



How far such hopes were eventually realized, or what were the circumstances under which Congress was forced to deviate from his plan or programme are matters which will be brought out in subsequent chapters of the history. In the meanwhile, he continued to function as their guide as long as that was possible. For, had he not become like their foster-father during office-acceptance; although his real children seemed to be voluntary organizations entrusted with the 'constructive programme' and not government, about which he had consistently held the view that that government was best which ruled the least?

### **Congress in Administration**

Congress remained in office in firstly six, and lastly in eight provinces from the summer of 1937 to about the end of October 1939, when resignation took place due to differences with the British Government on the question of India's participation in war. It was therefore in charge of administration in eight out of eleven provinces for about twenty-seven months.

Soon after acceptance of office, Congress was faced by a set of problems of a very varied character. Some were due to relations with the British Government, some due to forces operating in the country, but outside Congress control, and some were completely of internal origin. These ought to be dealt with separately. But before doing so, it would be useful to present a list of such problems. The outstanding ones in which the Congress organization and its government became involved were :

- (a) Maintenance of 'peace and tranquility'.
- (b) Land reform and zemindars.
- (c) Labour and peasant organization.
- (d) Agitation in the States.
- (e) Problem of universal education.
- (f) 'Nationalism' of the Muslim League.
- (g) Protection of provincials.
- (h) National planning.
- (i) Internal conflicts, such as those associated with the names of Khare, Nariman, Subhas Chandra Bose.

(a) *Maintenance of 'peace and tranquillity'*

In consonance with the election manifesto, the Ministries of U. P. and Bihar decided soon after acceptance of office to release prisoners convicted of 'subversive' activities in the past. As the Governors of these provinces were of opinion that this might lead to a disturbance of 'peace and tranquillity', they decided with the concurrence of the Governor-General to exercise their special powers and prevent release. The Ministries considered this to be an interference with their responsibility, as they had already satisfied themselves after interview with the prisoners that nothing untoward was likely to happen. So they submitted their resignation.

Gandhi and the Governor-General were drawn into the controversy, and so was the Working Committee. Eventually peace was restored and resignation withdrawn after Gandhi issued a statement to the following effect : 'In my opinion', he said, 'the crisis can be avoided if the Governors are left free to give the assurance that their examination of the cases was not intended to be a usurpation of the powers of the Ministers . . . . I hope the Working Committee will leave the Ministers free if they are summoned by the Governors to judge for themselves whether they are satisfied by the assurances they may receive' (JAR 1938, I, 65-69, 307-311).

(b) *Land reform and Zemindars*

Congress was also committed to the programme of land reform. Leaders like C. Sankaran Nair had already commented upon the element of 'Tolstoy Lenin communism' behind the Gandhian movement (*supra* 158). Now that Congress was in power, landholders began to feel that they should organize for protection of their interests.

A meeting was convened on 10 December 1938 in Darbhanga and the All-India Landholders' Federation was formed. It is interesting that the zemindars of Oudh had already met together on 29 May 1938 and threatened to start 'civil disobedience' if the U. P. Tenancy Act were passed in its unmodified form (JAR 1938, I, 24). The Bihar Legislature was actually forced to go into recess for about a month because no

settlement had been arrived at between landlords and the Congress over the Tenancy Bill.

In the meanwhile, the peasant movement gained in volume and intensity, and the Congress tried to strike a mean between the interests of the conflicting parties. Clashes continued to occur, and there was one such on 21 April 1939 in Darbhanga in Bihar between peasants and zemindars in which a number of the former were hurt.

The Bombay Premier gave an assurance that no tenancy legislation would be introduced in the State without due consideration of the landlords' views (IAR 1938, II, 3). A dispute arose over the same question in U. P. when the Education Minister is reported to have said in a small conference in Banaras district that the 'Congress Government had no desire to end the zemindari system' (IAR 1938, I, 21). An offer was moreover made in the same province to the zemindars that the dispute over the proposed tenancy regulation might be submitted by both parties to arbitration.

Such steps were obviously reminiscent of the Swaraj Party's Manifesto in which the principle had been enunciated that a mean, based on justice, had to be struck between the interests of 'agriculturists' and of landlords (*supra* 162).

### (c) *Labour and Peasant Organization*

On 10 July 1937, the President of the Congress, Jawaharlal Nehru, laid down the following principle for peasant organization. He said, 'where genuine peasant organizations exist we should co-operate with them. We cannot oppose the formation of such organizations for it is the undoubted right of the peasants to organise for the removal of their grievances.

'Where such organizations are politically reactionary they are not true peasant organizations and we cannot co-operate. Also where the peasant platform is utilised as a platform by opponents of the Congress, we cannot have anything to do with it.

'But while we co-operate with peasant organisations our primary duty is to make the Congress in the rural areas

as nearly a kisan organisation as is possible. Unless we do this in an ever-growing measure we shall lose living touch with the peasantry' (*IAR* 1937, I, 220-221).

Elsewhere he expressed the opinion, 'the Congress remains, and has to remain, a national organisation and it cannot always represent the functional or class interests of the workers and peasants. It cannot function as a trade union or kisan sabha. In actual practice where its contacts with the peasantry are considerable, it almost functions as a kisan sabha. The general tendency is for the Congress to develop into a predominantly peasant organisation and this process is likely to continue, but the leadership is bound to remain with the middle classes, chiefly the lower middle classes so long as the Congress remains the National Congress and does not undergo a sea-change into something entirely different' (*IAR* 1937, I, 225, also see *IAR* 1937, II, 362-366).

But as the All-India Kisan movement progressed, conflicts between the Congress and Kisan organizations became a feature of the years 1937 to 1939. In a brief history of the peasant movement, we are told that there were peasant rallies and marches all over the country in which one lakh of peasants in all participated. These were in Shillong, Patna, Lucknow, Lahore, Karachi, Poona, Nagpur, Cuttack, Madras and so on. In Tamil Nad, such rallies were intended 'to strengthen the Rent proposals of the Government Tenancy Committee' (*IAR* 1938, I, 354. Also see *IAR* 1937, I, 386-391).

Congress was perhaps a little disturbed, as we can gather from the following evidence. On 16 July 1938, Sarojini Naidu presided over a conference of jute mill labourers in Bengal and advised them not to strike in a light-hearted manner (*IAR* 1938, II, 3). On 14 April 1938, Jawaharlal Nehru 'deprecated repeated Kisan demonstrations as they were being made cheap and ridiculous' (*IAR* 1938, I, 17) and he also 'advised Kisans not to place any obstacle in the way of the smooth working of the Congress Ministries' (*IAR* 1938, I, 18). Addressing 50,000 kisans at a political conference in the U. P., he is reported to have advised kisans to 'understand politics and not to be blindly led by a few intelligent leaders' (*IAR* 1938,

II, 32). At Haripura, in February 1938, a resolution was passed on 'Kisan Sabhas' in which it was stated 'while fully recognising the right of the kisans to organise Kisan Sabhas, the Congress cannot associate itself with any activities which are incompatible with the basic principles of the Congress and will not countenance any of the activities of those Congressmen who as members of the Kisan Sabhas help in creating an atmosphere hostile to Congress principles and policy' (IAR 1938, I, 302).

In June 1939, the All India Congress Committee accepted a resolution to the effect 'that no Congressman may offer or organize any form of Satyagraha in the Administrative Provinces of India without the previous sanction of the Provincial Congress Committee concerned' (IAR 1939, I, 357). This was vigorously opposed by the leader of the All India Kisan Organization, Swami Sahajananda Saraswati (IAR 1939, I, 32).

Already in another meeting of the All India Congress Committee, a resolution had been passed on 29 September 1938 which condemned 'class war' and was intended to preserve 'civil liberties'. It stated, 'Inasmuch as people including Congressmen have been found in the name of civil liberty to advocate murder, arson, looting and class war by violent means and several newspapers are carrying on a campaign of falsehood and violence calculated to incite the readers to violence and to lead to communal conflicts the Congress warns the public that civil liberty does not cover acts of or incitement to violence or promulgation of palpable falsehoods. In spite therefore of the Congress policy on civil liberty remaining unchanged the Congress will consistently with its tradition support measures that may be undertaken by the Congress Governments for the defence of life and property' (IAR 1938, II, 278-279).

Gandhi evidently sympathized with the Congress. Commenting on the walk-out of a large number of Congressmen on the occasion when the above resolution on civil liberty was adopted, he wrote in the *Harijan* an article entitled 'That Unfortunate Walk Out' (H, vol. vi, 287). In it he said, 'The walk out has served one good purpose. It has brought out in clear light the fact that the Congress is not today the homogeneous

body it used to be. It has members and parties who have no faith in its creed or its constructive programme, specially khadi and prohibition.

'In these circumstances the Congress must cease to be a compact fighting organization engaged in a life and death struggle against the most experienced and organized corporation in the world.'

The best construction that can be put upon this was that Gandhi did not wish to divide the forces of battle on his side in the coming struggle for freedom. He wanted to maintain a united front ; while he tried to help the Congress to penetrate into the villages and reorganize rural economy with the help of the administration in order to serve as a foundation for that struggle. But the Congress Government seemed progressively to lean towards the establishment of a 'mean' between the claims of conflicting interests. This was also to be accompanied, in the near future, by methods of economic planning of a different character than that advocated by Gandhi.

The internal contradiction between Gandhi and Congressmen did not, however, come up to the surface until the latter half of 1939 when the second world war broke out. In the meanwhile, Gandhi co-operated at best he could with the Government as well as with the intelligentsia, with whom he had never felt quite at ease. Yet, the cleavage could not be wholly obliterated thereby.

During the years 1937 to 1939, severe labour disturbances took place. These did not seem to be of the same nature as those in the years following the Non-co-operation movement, when India tried to drill herself into Gandhi's method of satyagraha. In 1937, a widespread strike occurred for more than three months in the jute mills of Calcutta. Bombay textile workers were likewise involved in a serious trouble, when fire had to be opened in November 1938. In May 1939, there was a strike at Digboi oil works in Assam. Jute workers in Serampur in Bengal similarly went on a strike in 1939. Except in Bengal, the other two provinces were

under Congress rule ; and the methods pursued by the Government were different from those adopted by Gandhi in the Ahmedabad strike of 1918, for example.

The President of the Indian National Congress, Subhas Chandra Bose, himself drew the attention of the country to the mounting cleavage in the Congress ranks. In his presidential address at Haripura in February 1938, his concluding observation was as follows : 'We are faced with a serious situation today. Inside the Congress, there are differences between the Right and the Left which it would be futile to ignore . . . . The Congress today is the one supreme organ of mass struggle. It may have its Right-bloc and its Left—but it is the common platform for all anti-imperialist organisations striving for Indian emancipation . . . . I would appeal specially to the Leftist group in the country to pool all their strength and their resources for democratising the Congress and re-organising it on the broadest anti-imperialist basis . . . .

'In conclusion, I shall voice your feelings by saying that all India fervently hopes and prays that Mahatma Gandhi may be spared to our nation for many, many years to come. India cannot afford to lose him and certainly not at this hour. We need him to keep our struggle free from bitterness and hatred. We need him for the cause of Indian Independence. What is more - we need him for the cause of humanity . . . . We are fighting not for the sake of India alone, but for humanity as well' (*IAR* 1938, I, 348).

#### (d) *Agitation in the States*

In contrast to the period 1923-28, the present years were marked by a special kind of satyagraha.\* This was for the introduction of representative government in the five hundred and odd states under ruling princes which studded the land.

The Reforms of 1935 envisaged a Federation between princely India and India under British rule. British India

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\*A few minor satyagrahas of a rather unimportant character took place at this time, but they were not all initiated by Congressmen. Such were the *Om Mondali* satyagraha in Karachi and the Black Hole Monument satyagraha in Calcutta.

had already gained a certain measure of representative government ; but the States were very backward in that respect. So the proposal of Federation had been strongly opposed by the Congress and several other political parties under prevailing conditions.

There were movements against princely autocracy in Sikar in Rajasthan, Travancore, Mysore, Hyderabad and so on in 1938 and 1939. The Orissan States of Dhenkanal, Talcher and Ranpur were also shaken by powerful agitation. But, on the whole, the Congress tried to avoid conflicts in this front ; although its sympathies were clearly expressed on behalf of the subjects under the States.

The initiative in the State People's Movement was quite often taken by local Congressmen on their own. In Hyderabad, it was undertaken by the Arya Samaj itself. In most cases, Gandhi tried to avoid conflict ; for, if the masses of British India were somewhat familiar with the object and the technique of satyagraha, the States people were still less so. So, under his advice, satyagraha was suspended in Mewar (IAR 1939, I, 23) as well as in Rajnandgaon and Chhuikhadan in what is now Madhya Pradesh.

In one State, namely Rajkot, Gandhi became personally involved in a movement ; and when the latter reached a stalemate, he undertook a fast as in Ahmedabad, and the movement progressed through somewhat tortuous ways. Anyhow, the masses did not become seriously involved ; and satyagraha became transformed into a tussle between the State authorities, on the one hand, and Gandhi himself, as a person, on the other. The masses, as well as their leader in the struggle, namely Vallabhbhai Patel seemed to have receded into the background.

The Congress policy on agitation in the States was clearly laid down at its Haripura session, as well as in the Working Committee's proceedings of 11 to 16 December 1938 at Wardha (IAR 1938, II, 299). Vallabhbhai Patel issued a kind of veiled threat when he said in his presidential address at the Bhaunagar Praja Parishad, 'The Princes should become the real protector of the people ; they should follow in the



footsteps of the King Emperor and devise means to avert forever a clash between the Ruler and the ruled, which was inevitable if early steps were not taken' (JAR 1939, I, 32). At the fifteenth session of the Baroda State Subjects Conference he also said, 'Unless and until popular legislatures are established in the States and the States' administrations are carried on with the full consent and approval of the people's representatives, it is futile to talk of Federation' (JAR 1938, II, 21).

It might be recalled here that Gandhi had held in 1909, as well as in 1915, that the Princes were the creation of the British power. They existed on the sufferance of the latter. In a way, therefore, the Princes did not have the strength to maintain themselves. And this is partly reflected by the lack of seriousness with which the States problem was regarded by the Congress. If terms could be settled with the British, the States would be no problem at all.

Probably it was the same idea which was in Gandhi's mind when he said to an American journalist, Louis Fisher, in 1942 that if the peasants 'seized the land', the 'landlords may co-operate.' When Mr. Fisher expressed serious doubts, Gandhi explained that 'they would co-operate by fleeing' (Fisher 1942, 90-91).

#### (e) *Problem of universal education*

One of the most urgent problems facing the Government was the problem of education. This was next in importance only to the problem of poverty. Gandhi suggested constructive means by which education of the right kind could be extended to the remotest village. He devised a system which was known first as the Wardha Scheme, then as Basic Education or Nai Talim.

According to this scheme, every child had to learn a craft while at school. The specialty was that the child had to be given general education *through* the craft, instead of the latter being merely an adjunct to a predominantly literary education. This approximated closely the ideas propounded by Peter Kropotkin, or by educationists like John Dewey.

But there was also a difference. India being a poor country it was difficult for the Government to finance all the schools needed. Gandhi framed his plan in such a manner that a substantial portion of the expenses could be met by the children from the products of their own labour. This was particularly true of the later stages of the school course. In other words, although activity or crafts had been recommended by educationists like Dewey as a vehicle of education of the body and mind, Gandhi wanted to use the school not merely for education for its own sake, but also for preparing the child after leaving school to take his place as an earning member of society. His training in a craft was thus to serve a practical purpose as well (see *IAR* 1937, II, 451-458).\*

Gandhi is reported to have also said that while 'Herr Hitler was achieving his goal through the sword, he was doing so through peace' (*IAR* 1938, I, 18).

The Wardha Scheme was vigorously opposed by the National Liberal Federation. In 1937, a resolution was passed to the effect that 'the Federation viewed with alarm the decisions . . . . and particularly considered the proposal to make elementary education practically self-supporting, to be entirely unpractical and calculated to subordinate the acquisition of culture to considerations of earning by children by their craft and, if persisted in, the Federation believed it would put back the progress of the country' (*IAR* 1937, II, 376). In the following year, the President of the Federation referred to the Wardha Scheme thus : 'I think you will agree with me in holding that the Wardha Scheme is educationally unsound. It is wrong to give to education a severely militaristic character from the very start. You and I do not want our children and our neighbours' children to be turned into factory workers without even the restrictions which the Factory Act impose on employers. It has been left to this country to discover that education can be made self-supporting. I should have

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\* An excellent, brief statement is furnished by Aryanayakam, E. W. : *The Story of Twelve Years*, 1950, Hindusthani Talimi Sangh, Wardha, Also Kripalani, J. B., *The Latest Fad, : Basic Education*, 2nd. ed., 1946. and Varkey, C. J.. *The Wardha Scheme of Education*, 2nd. ed. 1946,

thought that a party which claims to represent the masses would realize that educational opportunity is fundamental to economic opportunity, that higher education cannot be measured in terms of rupees, annas and pias' (IAR 1938, II, 373).

Muslim League was equally opposed to the Scheme ; but on other grounds. The Scheme was described as un-Islamic and injurious to the cultural interests of Muslims. Presiding over the All-India Muslim Educational Conference in October 1938, A. K. Fazlul Huq commented on the 'objectionable feature' of the Wardha Scheme in which schools would be 'turned into factories or ashrams'. His suggestion was that as material and spiritual developments are combined in Islam, 'the representation of Muslim teachers in all schools should be adequate so that the development of the mind of Muslim children might not take place exclusively in non-Muslim surroundings. Muslim children should not be compelled to learn music and sing *Bande Mataram* since both these were against the principles of Islam' (IAR 1938, II, 438).

In 1939, the Muslim League appointed a committee under the chairmanship of the Raja Saheb of Pirpur to report on the educational problems of Muslims. The report was published on 8 April 1939. It had some very important observations to make upon the Wardha Scheme. It is reported to have said 'that while the Wardha Scheme claims to exclude the religious institutions of different Indian communities, it really aims at supplanting all other religions by a new religion—Gandhism'. It also said, 'We are in no way condemning the doctrine of non-violence, but in an educational scheme there must be scope for teaching different forms of political doctrines. If from their childhood boys and girls are made to think in terms of superiority of non-violence, it may produce the same results as the doctrine of superiority of race has done in certain totalitarian States. To base an education scheme on the creed of a leader of a political party is to impart a method of education that finds favour in totalitarian states and is clearly contrary to sound principles of education. This will involve giving education a religious garb. It will clearly imply the

welding of two nations into one synthetic culture by means of a system of primary education and will only facilitate the conversion of the youth to the ideals of the Congress' (*IAR* 1939, I, 475).

In the presidential address of the All India Muslim League at Patna in December 1938, M. A. Jinnah had already referred to Wardha Education Scheme and Vidya Mandir Scheme in the following terms : 'These had been propounded after careful deliberation and with a definite object. The genius behind these was Mr. Gandhi and it was Mr. Gandhi alone who destroyed the very ideal with which the Congress started its career and converted it into a communal Hindu body, with a view to a revival and propagation of Hindu culture' (*IAR* 1938, II, 345).

Apart from the two kinds of criticism to which Basic Education was subjected, there were other difficulties which were of internal origin. Although the new system was taken up by Congress governments in seven provinces, the actual execution, at the administrative level, was entrusted to officers many of whom did not perhaps subscribe to the kind of revolution which its author had in view. In trying to explain the ultimate objective, Gandhi had written as follows : 'My plan to impart primary education through the medium of village handicrafts like spinning and carding, etc., is thus conceived as the spearhead of a silent social revolution fraught with the most far-reaching consequences. It will provide a healthy and moral basis of relationship between the city and the village and thus go a long way towards eradicating some of the worst evils of the present social insecurity and poisoned relationship between the classes. It will check the progressive decay of our villages, and lay the foundation of a juster social order in which there is no unnatural division between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' and everybody is assured of a living wage and the right to freedom. And all this would be accomplished without the horrors of a bloody class-war or a colossal capital expenditure such as would be involved in the mechanization of a vast continent like India. Nor would it entail a helpless dependence on foreign imported machinery or mechanical skill. Lastly, by

obviating the necessity for highly specialised talent, it would place the destiny of the masses, as it were, in their own hands' (*Selections*, no. 834).

It was this aspect of Basic Education which was likely to arouse opposition of a more subtle nature than that offered by either the Muslim League or the Liberals. There was opposition in Governmental circles to the idea of making basic schools self-sufficient. Indeed, when the Congress was in a position to exercise generosity, money was lavished on buildings and equipments so that, practically, the basic schools were smothered and deflected effectively from their search for self-sufficiency. That came to be regarded as an 'unpractical' ideal.

It is also interesting and significant that after Congress came into power, several expensive schools were established in different parts of the country. And these were modelled after the Public Schools of England. The sons of the new class of administrators, commercial or industrial magnates were sent to them or to existing English schools rather than to Basic Schools for 'better education'. In other words, a grave blow to the new educational system of Gandhi was delivered from within rather than from without.

In the meanwhile, workers who subscribed to Gandhian ideals in education, continued to struggle in isolated corners of the country. When the second world war came along, and Congress resigned from office, many workers who had buried themselves in villages found themselves once more in prison.

#### (f) '*Nationalism*' of the Muslim League

Of all problems faced by the Congress while in office, the gravest one from the political point of view was considered to be the position taken up by the Muslim League.

Hitherto, some Muslims had drifted away from the Congress after the Khilafat debacle. Others had remained loyal to the Congress itself; some had organized themselves as 'nationalist' parties of one shade or another. Muslim League, however, had been in consistent opposition. The reader will recall that although the separateness of Muslim interests and

the need of special protection was emphasized by numerous Muslim leaders or organizations, the need was always felt of coming to some kind of settlement with other parties. There were differences between one party and another representing Muslim interests or demands ; but no one had openly advocated the organization of Muslims in India as a 'separate nation' until after Congress started administration.

As is characteristic of 'nationalism' in the political field, it thrives best when a community is faced by a common enemy. Muslims, as a whole, had never been united ; and it was the same with the Hindus. But Hindus were slowly becoming a 'nation' under the stress of the rising resistance against British authority. They might belong to the Congress or to one or another of the revolutionary parties, or even to the Moderate groups. Yet, all experienced an urgency of 'national self-realization', which was, more or less, a reaction against subservience to alien rule. Under creative leadership, it had already yielded a rich cultural harvest ; but its parentage was not to be mistaken.

While the Hindus were thus being transformed into a nation, Muslims, as a sect, had remained aloof. And although some leaders like Syed Ahmed had tried to bring about internal reform, and a unification through puritanic revival, Muslims had, on the whole, remained distant from the progress which springs from the rise of nationalism.

Of all leaders who recognized an opportunity of such unification after the events of 1937, M. A. Jinnah was undoubtedly the most far-sighted ; and also operationally the most effective. He clearly moved away from the idea of an Indian nationhood, of which he had himself been once an ardent advocate, and now devoted himself to the prospects of a 'national' unification of Mussalmans. Even though this may sound as an over-simplification, yet one might perhaps justifiably suggest that the Indian nation was born in opposition to British rule. By the same token, the Muslim nation was born in opposition to Congress rule.

And this is how it was operationally achieved. Jinnah opened his offensive against the Congress on several fronts. And in disregard of whether he could deliver a decisive blow or not, he maintained the offensive without intermission. Strategically, he pursued the policy of Lawrence of Arabia who knew that it would be hard to deal a decisive blow against Turkish authority in middle Arabia. Yet, if the offensive were maintained, and an open sore kept up, it would at least prevent the Turkish empire from re-consolidating its position.

Jinnah's strategy went one step further ; he would not even allow the Congress to extend its hand towards the Muslim masses at all. He tried successfully to create an inhibition at that end. It is unnecessary to deal with its detailed history ; but the broad elements of his war against Congress which was utilized for the sake of rousing the feeling of Muslim 'nationalism' will be presented in the briefest outline.

In this connection, there is one tactical element to which attention should be drawn at this stage ; for it happened to be one of great political significance. Jinnah refused to look upon any organization other than the Muslim League as being able to represent 'Muslim' interests. If there were numerous Muslim members in the Congress ; if many nationalist Muslims had organized themselves as the Jamiat-ul-ulema-i-Hind, or the Ahrar Conference or Shia Conference, he stubbornly refused to give any recognition to these organizations. Its Muslim members had to be isolated and treated separately by the Muslim League as individuals who were guilty of defection. And when it came to the Congress, he stiffly refused to consider it as anything other than a representative of 'Hindu' interests, whatever that might mean.

The result was, that by constant reiteration of this viewpoint, and his determination to regard the Congress as an enemy to whom one might offer battle, or even terms of peace, he helped to crystallize Muslim sentiments round a 'nationalistic' idea. His unique tenacity in this respect helped to bring the Muslim 'nation' into being. Before that, it was as loose and undifferentiated from the rest of India's population as the Hindus had been from Christians, or from Jainas or Sikhs in

western and north-western India and from tribal communities living in eastern and middle India. The latter did not become a separate nation just because their culture was markedly different. But the Muslims did, under Jinnah's able leadership.

Let us now proceed very briefly with the story of how Jinnah carried on his opposition to Congress rule.

It is necessary at this stage to remember that there were many organizations in which Muslims and non-Muslims shared without reference to their religious beliefs. Such were Trade Unions, Peasant Unions, Kisan Sabhas, Debt Committees, Landlords' Associations, Chambers of Commerce, Employers' Associations, etc. Among specifically Muslim associations were such bodies as the Proja Party, Ahrar Conference, Jamiat-ul-ulema, Congress Nationalist Muslims, Shia Conference, and so on.

The first important demand of the Muslim League was that it should be treated as the *only* representative of 'Muslim interests' in India to the exclusion of every other organization named above. The Congress could have no claim in that respect as it was an organization representing 'Hindu' interests alone. One of the nationalist leaders of India, who happened to be also a Muslim, namely, Asaf Ali, once made the observation that 'about 33 per cent of rural indebtedness (roughly 300 crores of rupees) on an average rate of 9 per cent interest, covers the liabilities of the Muslim population of India. In other words, nearly 27 crores of rupees a year should be paid by Muslims to keep down interest only. More often than not 75 per cent of this interest is not paid regularly, and the accumulated liability converts owners of land into landless tillers—mere peasants in sufferance.' A contributor to *The Indian Annual Register*, while quoting this, also made the important observation that the Muslim League appeared to be indifferent to questions of this nature (*IAR* 1938, I, 58).

Indeed the interests which it sponsored were partly 'cultural' in nature, and if it was of an economic kind, it specifically affected the interests of the upper or middle classes.



If was also tacitly assumed that if there were Muslim representatives in the legislature, they would advocate 'Muslim' economic interests naturally. This meant by implication that Muslims were *not* divided by conflicting economic interests at all. But as we have said, this was as untrue of Hindus as of Muslims in India.

In the Lucknow meeting of the All-India Muslim League, Jinnah's complaint was, 'The All-India Muslim League certainly and definitely stands to safeguard the rights and interests of the Mussalmans and other minorities effectively. That is its basic and cardinal principle. The Congress attempt under the guise of establishing mass contact with the Mussalmans is calculated to divide and weaken and break the Mussalmans and is an effort to detach them from their accredited leaders' (IAR 1937, II, 404). It is also interesting to note in this connection that the Liberal leader, Chimanlal Setalvad's complaint against the Congress was identical. Presiding over the National Liberal Federation in December 1937, he said, 'I am afraid the Congress has given great provocation by trying to ignore the Muslim League and to go over the heads of the Moslem leaders to the Moslem masses. Such an attempt can only lead to further disruption among the Moslems and render more difficult an honourable understanding between the two communities' (IAR 1937, II, 370).

In any case, the demands made by M. A. Jinnah during the many negotiations which Congress leaders like Gandhi, Rajendra Prasad, Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose had with him eventually boiled down to a little over a dozen points (see IAR 1937, I, 229-230 ; IAR 1938, I, 359-376 ; IAR 1938, II, 284-286).

These demands have been discussed in full by Rajendra Prasad in his *India Divided* (Prasad 1946, 131 ff). In 1938, they stood more or less as follows :

1. The fourteen points formulated by the Muslim League in 1929.

2. The Congress should withdraw all opposition to the Communal Award and should not describe it as a negation of nationalism.

3. The share of the Muslims in the State services should be definitely fixed in the Constitution by a statutory enactment.

4. Muslim personal law and culture should be guaranteed by statute.

5. The Congress should take on hand the agitation in connection with the Shahidganj Mosque and should use its moral pressure to enable the Muslims to gain possession of the Mosque.

6. The Muslim's right to call Azan and perform their religious ceremonies should not be fettered in any way.

7. Muslims should have freedom to perform cow-slaughter.

8. Muslim majorities in the provinces where such majorities exist at present, must not be affected by any territorial re-distribution or adjustments

9. The 'Bande Mataram' song should be given up.

10. Muslims want Urdu to be the national language of India and they desire to have statutory guarantee that the use of Urdu shall not be curtailed or damaged.

11. Muslim representation in the local bodies should be governed by the principles underlying the Communal Award.

12. The Tricolour Flag should be changed or alternately, the flag of the Muslim League should be given equal importance.

13. Recognition of the Muslim League as the one authoritative and representative organization of Indian Muslims.

14. Coalition Ministries.

In summarizing the League's demands in the above terms, the Congress President, Jawaharlal Nehru, went on to say in his letter to Jinnah : 'It is further stated that the formula evolved by you and Babu Rajendra Prasad in 1935 does not satisfy the Muslims now and nothing on these lines will satisfy them. It is added that the list given above is not a complete list and it can be augmented by the addition of further 'demands' (IAR 1938, II, 369-370).

Tactically, it was advantageous to keep the demands fluid. For then, the adversary could be left guessing all the while, and no settlement need be arrived at at all, even, as a temporary measure. In any case, one notices among the 'demands' hardly any claim on behalf of the economically down-trodden population of India, whether Muslim or otherwise. Shortly after these demands were formulated, there was added a demand for a 'homeland' of Muslims in the east and west of India, and then in the middle south 'which was at that time formed by the princely State of Hyderabad (see particularly *IAR* 1939, I, 366-371).

Jinnah's objective was clearly set forth in his presidential address at the meeting of the All-India Muslim League in Patna in December 1938. In it he made the following significant observation: 'The League had assiduously and gradually established itself and developed into a strong body of Muslims. But a great task lay ahead of them. They had so far only stirred from sleep and their political consciousness had to be developed along with their moral and cultural consciousness. He admitted that the Hindus had to a large extent acquired the essential quality of cultural and political consciousness, which could be termed national consciousness. He wanted the Muslims to develop to the same degree, if not more, such national consciousness. Mere numerical strength was not enough (*IAR* 1938, II, 345).

We need not go any further into details except by stating that the persistent complaint of the Muslim League, under Jinnah, against Congress in administration was that they failed to satisfy the demands presented from time to time by the Muslim League on behalf of all Muslims in India. And it was this sedulous propagation of a 'persecution complex' which materially helped to bring about a feeling of 'oneness' among Muslims. Correspondingly, other organizations which worked among Muslims slowly lost their influence over the masses. It was more tempting and more exciting for any suppressed group of people, whether peasant or labourer, belonging to any religious denomination whatsoever, to be told that their sorrows were due to the sins of others, and not to any weakness of

their own, which had to be corrected before further advance became possible. With this object in view, Jinnah set up the fictitious image of a 'Hindu' Congress which always tried to suppress Mussalmans as Mussalmans, before which other forces which tried to consolidate Mussalmans were swept away in competition.

We have used the term 'fictitious' advisedly ; because the Congress had never been an organization which sponsored any interest which was specifically and culturally identifiable with Hinduism. It had rather done the opposite ; as was rightly pointed out by the Hindu Mahasabha. If the Congress had any leanings at all, it was towards striking a mean between upper and middle class *secular* interests, on the one hand, and those belonging to the working people, on the other. It had refused to make the latter its prime concern, although Gandhi had slowly and persistently tried to steer the organization in that direction. (See particularly *Selections*, no. 302, and whole of chs. vii, viii.)

(g) *Protection of Provincials*

The progressive concern of the Administration for the interests of the rising professional classes in each province became more and more pronounced as the Congress proceeded with its rule. And this is a topic which deserves careful treatment.

On 14 April 1938, a non-official resolution was introduced in the Bihar Legislative Assembly by a Congress member which was 'vigorously supported' by other members. This was to the effect that Government should take steps to secure employment of at least 80% of Biharis in all classes of employment in industrial concerns aided by the Government. The Minister in charge replied that 'while the Government sympathised whole-heartedly with the spirit of the resolution, the Government could not compel by law the industries to increase employment of Biharis. Biharis themselves were greatly responsible if they were insufficiently represented in industries, since they had not been enterprising enough—while capitalists from outside the province came forward to meet

the situation. Certain industries like coal were mostly owned by foreign concerns, in possession of long-term leases, while others like sugar were protected industries and could not be compelled to increase the number of Biharis employed in them. In a concern like the Tata's some amount of pressure could be applied so far as unskilled labour was concerned, but they complained that sufficient number of skilled workers were not available among Biharis' (*IAR* 1938, I, 211).

Even before the Congress came into power in Bihar, three circulars had been issued by the local government, the object of which was 'to remove disparity in numbers of Biharis and Bengalis in Government service. The case of Biharis and the Government (was) that Bengalis (were) over-represented in the services whereas Biharis (had) not received their due share in them' (Prasad 1939, 24)\*. Accordingly, the Bihar Government had made it a rule for people not born in Bihar, or not having the provincial language as their mother tongue, that they should obtain a domicile certificate in order to qualify for business contract, education, or employment by Government or local bodies. The idea was that 'Bihar soil' belonged to Biharis, and was not meant for 'outsiders' or 'foreigners' except where special skill or merit made relaxation of the rule necessary in the opinion of the Government.

After Congress came into power, the practice of issuing domicile certificates continued as before. The defence of the Bihar Premier was that domicile certificates were in the interest of Bengalis themselves (*IAR* 1938, I, 23). But complaints were forthcoming that the rule was applied in a very undesirable manner. The Working Committee eventually moved in the matter and appointed a Committee under the chairmanship of Rajendra Prasad in order to report upon the 'Bengali Bihari Question'. A distinguished lawyer, and the younger brother of C. R. Das, namely, P. R. Das, submitted a memorandum to

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\*A very valuable note is present in *The Indian Annual Register* with regard to the employment of Biharis in Bengal. This was, however, not the concern of the Bihar Government who were immediately interested in the question of Bengalis employed on the 'soil of Bihar' (see *IAR* 1938, II, 53-57).

the Chairman in which his principal argument was that the grant of a domicile certificate by any provincial government was *ultra vires*. There could be only one citizenship in India, and no provincial government had the right to grant a domicile certificate, which was another name for naturalization certificate.

The Chairman reviewed all the questions involved, and made some very important observations before finally submitting his recommendations. He said, 'Shri Das has earnestly pleaded that if there is to be one nationality there should be no discrimination allowed between one Indian and another and that if such discrimination is allowed by the Congress, it is not only against the whole history and policy of the Congress, but also destructive of all hope of future consolidation of the country. I fully appreciate the sentiment and sympathise with it. While it must be recognised that the rich variety of Indian culture and diversity of life in various parts of the country be preserved and cherished, it is equally if not even more necessary to recognise that the idea of a common nationality and a common background of our cultural and historical inheritance must always be encouraged so that India should become a full and strong nation built upon a unity of purpose. All separatist tendencies and a narrow provincialism should therefore be discouraged. But it is not possible also to ignore the fact that the demand for creation of separate provinces *based largely on a desire to secure larger share in public services and other facilities offered by a popular national administration\** is becoming more and more insistent, and hitherto backward communities and groups are coming up in education and demanding their fair share in them. It is neither possible nor wise to ignore these demands and it must be recognised that in regard to services and like matters the people of a province have a certain claim which cannot be overlooked' (ibid., 20-21).

After reviewing the report, the Working Committee of the Congress came to the following decision at Bardoli on 11-14 January 1939.

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\* Italics, present author's.

'1 While the Committee are of opinion that the rich variety of Indian culture and diversity of life in the various parts of the country should be preserved and cherished, the idea of a common nationality and a common background of our cultural and historical inheritance must always be encouraged, so that India should become a free and strong nation built upon a unity of purpose and aim. Therefore the Committee wish to discourage all separatist tendencies and a narrow provincialism. Nevertheless the Committee are of opinion that in regard to services and like matters the people of a province have a certain claim which cannot be overlooked.

'2. In regard to services the Committee are of opinion that there should be no bar preventing the employment of any Indian, living in any part of the country from seeking employment in any other part. But certain considerations must govern such employment, apart from the essential condition of merit and efficiency, which is of particular importance in the higher services and in the selection of specialists and experts. These considerations are :

(i) A fair representation of various communities in the province.

(ii) The encouragement, as far as possible, of backward classes and groups so that they might develop and play their full part in the national life.

(iii) A preferential treatment of the people of the province. It is desirable that this preferential treatment should be governed by certain rules and regulations framed by provincial governments in order to prevent individual officers from applying different standards. Further it is desirable that similar rules should be applicable to all provinces

'3. In regard to Bihar no distinction should be made between Biharis properly so-called and the Bengali-speaking residents of the province born or domiciled there. The term Bihari should in fact include both these classes and in the matter of services, as well as other matters, an identical treatment should be given to both. It is permissible to give a certain preference in services to these residents of the province over people from other provinces.

'4. The practice of issuing certificates of domicile should be abolished. Applicants for services should state that they are residents of or domiciled in the province. In all appropriate cases the Government will have the right to satisfy itself about the correctness of the statement before making an appointment.

'5. Domicile should be proved by evidence that implies that the applicant has made the province his home. In deciding that he has done so, length of residence, possession of house or other property, and other relevant matters should be taken into consideration and the conclusions arrived at on the totality of the evidence available. However, birth in the province or ten years' continuous residence should be regarded as sufficient proof of domicile.

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'7. There should be no prohibition against any one carrying on trade or business in the province. It is desirable that firms or factories carrying on business in a province, should develop local contacts by giving appointment, wherever possible, to residents of the province. But suggestions made by provincial Government to firms and factories in the matter of appointments may be misunderstood and therefore should be avoided.

'8. When accommodation is limited in educational institutions, places may be reserved for different communities in the province, but the reservation should be in a fair proportion. Preference in such educational institutions may be given to people of the Province.'

When one reads the recommendations carefully, one is struck by the fact that the people of one province within India were now to be discriminated from others in respect of certain benefits which lay within the powers of a 'popular national administration' to bestow. Undoubtedly, the reason was that different 'provinces' of India were unequally developed. But it is questionable if this was the best way of equalizing conditions. In any case, peasants, artisans and the elite belonging to the Muslim persuasion, *taken as a whole*, had



been treated as 'backward' collectively ; and the Congress had tried to arrive at various kinds of settlement with the elite of the Muslim sect in order to promote equality and bring about a sense of national unity. (Cf. The Bengal Pact of 1924, *supra* 161.) By actual experience, disunity and separatism had been encouraged instead.

With that experience behind them, it is surprising that a new communalism was being given almost statutory recognition. By it, Indians born in a particular province, or speakers of a particular language were to be denoted as either 'progressive' or 'backward'; the latter needing special protection against open competition in the employment market.

Gandhi had also pleaded for protection. But that protection had hitherto been in favour of suppressed castes, or toilers in the fields and factories, or in favour of handicrafts destroyed by the advance of commerce and industry. (See *Selections*, nos. 398, 325 and *H*, vol. ii, 204.) If that kind of protection could be morally defended, it was hard to defend the protection which the Muslims as a separate community demanded, or which was now being recommended for 'backward classes' and 'backward areas' irrespective of economic distinctions which lay between social classes within the same geographical region.

It is consequently of some importance to enquire, what views Gandhi himself held with regard to this bothersome problem affecting Congress administration.

In an article written after independence, i.e. nearly eight years after the present problem had become acute, he wrote, 'Bihar is undoubtedly for Biharis, but it is also for India. What is true of Bihar is equally true of all the provinces in the Union. No Indian can be treated as a foreigner in Bihar as he may be treated in Pakistan of today or vice versa. It is necessary to bear this difference in mind if we are to avoid difficulties and heart-burn. Though then every Indian of the Union has a right to settle in Bihar, he must not do so to oust the Biharis'.

To which 'Biharis' was he referring ? Did he mean the labouring people of Bihar and were these being 'ousted' by

unfair competition ? Or, had he chiefly in mind its city-dwellers and rising professional classes, the 'intelligentsia', who lived upon the toils of others, as they also lived for the matter of that in Bengal or any other province in India ? Had he not been severe in his denunciation of the latter ? (*Selections* no. 238.) But it appears from his argument in the present context that he lumped the two classes together against anyone who came from 'outside' in order to exploit. The article then proceeds : 'If the qualification was not actively operated, it is possible to conceive such an inrush of non-Bihari Indians as to flood out the Biharis. We are thus forced to the conclusion that a non-Bihari who settles in Bihar must do so to serve Bihar, not to exploit it after the manner of our old masters' (*Selections*, no. 544).

Perhaps it was obscure with Gandhi for a while that a Bihari born and living all his life within the province might also become as much of an exploiter of other Biharis as those who came from outside. Moreover, a non-Bihari need not necessarily come into a province as an exploiter. There may be other ways also in which he could make an honest living.

Gandhi had expressed quite clearly many times the view that the Swaraj of his conception was to be won by the masses in their own right. The goats had to be sifted from the sheep : the beginning of the revolution had to be made by and through the middle and upper classes. But, in free India, the latter were to be tolerated only if they subserved the interests of the poor.\* In the present context, however, he took a 'nationalistic' view in the sense that he thought there was no inherent conflict between the interests of the two classes. As a matter of fact, he explicitly said so in a statement in March 1934 (*Selections*, no 302).

It was perhaps this carry-over of nationalism, to which he half subscribed, which prevented him from seeing the light

\*I will therefore state the purpose. It is complete freedom from alien yoke in every sense of the term, and this for the sake of the dumb millions. Every interest, therefore, that is hostile to their interest, must be revised or must subside if it is not capable of revision (*Selections*. no. 324 Also see whole of chs. vii & viii).

clearly at times. Later on, in 1947, or about the time when he was writing the above article on the provincial question, he also said in course of a post-prayer meeting that a capitalistic structure of society could only be reared upon violence, whether open or tacit, and in a non-violent society, anything gained by violence had to be given up if it had to be defended by means of non-violence (see *Selections*, 'no. 162).

In any case, in this advocacy of a solution offered to the Government of Bihar, he came as nearly as he could to the 'national mean of interests', and strayed away as far as he possibly could from the primacy of the interests of the 'working people'. In spite of such an endeavour not to part company with the Congress leaders, it did not, however, take very long for differences with them to come to the surface on the twin issues of National Planning and of participation in the second world war in late 1939.

#### (h) *National Planning*

Subhas Chandra Bose was elected President in 1938. His address at Haripura indicated lines of departure from the policy or programme so long pursued by the Congress. Domestic problems had been, more or less, its principal concern; but Bose struck a new note when he reviewed India's position in relation to political forces operating in the contemporary world. And in conformity with that, he suggested a programme of economic reconstruction which was markedly different from the one advocated since 1921.

Bose laid great stress upon the need of a strong centralized government which would also be responsible for economic and social reconstruction. He proceeded to explain: 'Regarding reconstruction, our principal problem will be how to eradicate poverty from our country. That will require a radical reform of our land system including the abolition of landlordism. Agricultural indebtedness will have to be liquidated and provision made for cheap credit for the rural population. An extension of the co-operative movement will be necessary for the benefit of both producers and consumers. Agriculture will have to be put on a scientific basis with a view to increasing the yield from land. To solve the economic problem, agricultural

improvement will not be enough. A comprehensive scheme of industrial development under state-ownership and state control will be indispensable. A new industrial system will have to be built up in place of the old one which has collapsed as a result of mass production abroad and alien rule at home. The planning commission will have to consider carefully and decide which of the home industries could be revived despite the competition of modern factories and, in which sphere large-scale production should be encouraged. However much we may dislike modern industrialism and condemn the evils which follow in its train, we cannot go back to the pre-industrial eras, even if we desire to do so. It is well therefore that we should reconcile ourselves to industrialisation and devise means to minimise its evils and at the same time explore the possibilities of reviving cottage industries where there is a possibility of their surviving the inevitable competition of factories. In a country like India, there will be plenty of room for cottage industries, especially in the case of industries including hand-spinning and weaving allied to agriculture.

‘Last but not least, the State on the advice of a planning commission will have to adopt a comprehensive scheme for gradually socialising our entire agricultural and industrial system in both the spheres of production and appropriation. Extra capital will have to be procured for this, whether through internal or external loans or through inflation ( IAR 1938, I, 341-342. See also IAR 1939, I, 75-76).

This was indeed a significant departure. And although it ran against the general current of feeling in Congress circles, yet many Congressmen seemed inwardly to sympathize with it, though there was hesitancy in acknowledgement until a few years later.

Subhas Chandra Bose established a National Planning Committee under the chairmanship of Jawaharlal Nehru. The celebrated physicist Meghnad Saha was one of its members ; while the cottage industries wing was represented by J. C. Kumarappa of the All-India Village Industries Association and Satish Chandra Das Gupta of Khadi Pratisthan in Bengal.

Within a short time, rumours were afloat that differences had developed between the two wings. There is not much of published evidence on the point. But perhaps it would not be unfair to record here some events which took place, as they were gathered at the time from one of the members of the Committee.

On 31 August 1939, Meghnad Saha wrote in an unpublished letter to the editor of *The Visvabharati Quarterly* : 'I have gone deeply into the social implications of industry, and it is my deliberate opinion that cottage industries cannot flourish in this age except as feeders to the main industries. Without entering into details we can compare the whole industrial fabric of the country to a large tree of which the roots and stem are formed by what are called the key industries, namely, production of power, heavy chemicals, metals and provision of transport industries. The medium scale industries and cottage industries form the branches and leaves. Now . . . if the leaves are withering, no sensible gardener will apply water to the leaves . . . . He will irrigate the soil and see to it that the water reaches the roots and he will know that the leaves will automatically revive.

'The cottage industries in this country do not flourish because we depend on ancient technique and our actions are divorced from the main currents of progress . . . By adopting the slogan of "cottage industries" and "back to villages" we are doing the greatest mischief which can be done to the growth of human life and civilization on this continent.'

The opposite point of view was set forth in a *Memorandum for the Cottage Industries Subcommittee of the National Planning Committee* for consideration at the Wardha sitting of 20 September 1939. It stated : 'when all available human power is employed and when all the available animal power is employed, then of course, electric and similar power may be utilised. But there is no prospect for this in the near future. There are industries where electric or steam power must be employed, and there is no bar to such power being used there. But for cottages one must exhaust all sources of available human and animal labour before thinking of introducing mechanical power.'

It is said that both wings submitted their points of view to Gandhi at Wardha for his personal opinion. He is then reported to have advised the two to prepare independent plans based upon a number of common premises. These were, (a) India was definitely not to depend on foreign loans for development. All money available in India had to be utilized, no matter whether held by private or public organizations; all of it had to be placed at the disposal of the nation. (b) A certain standard of living had to be defined as the objective. And both had to approximate it within a comparable measure of time.

Gandhi is moreover reported to have said that if it were discovered that the Kumarappa-Das Gupta plan involved an *inordinately long time or expense* in comparison with the other plan, then, before he retired, he would love to save all the wood used for manufacturing spinning wheels, at least for use as domestic fuel.

The National Planning Committee began work and produced a number of valuable reports. But before anything could be done, India became deeply involved in the world war. And when the war was over, it left India enthusiastic about 'modernization'. A few enthusiasts still believed in the Gandhian programme of economic development; but the Congress as an organization adopted plans built more in line with Russian and American models. There was an occasional renewal of loyalty to the Gandhian plan at the sentimental level; but it virtually ceased to affect the development of the country ever since 1937, when Congress first came into power. The difference was intensified after 1947 when the transfer of power took place from British to Indian hands.

#### (1) *Internal Tensions*

One thing is noticeable all through Gandhi's relationship with the Indian National Congress. Whenever he sensed a difference strong enough between the 'intelligentsia' and himself he tended to withdraw from active responsibility, yet did not allow himself to drift wholly away from his erstwhile co-workers. His desire was to keep as close to them as possible, by accepting every one of their views which was not directly opposed to his

fundamentals. And thus many a difference was glossed over. But one cannot feel sure that occasionally this did not lead Gandhi to even a suppression of some of his cherished ideas, as happened in the case of Council-entry in 1924.

But besides this submerged tension within the Congress, there were also issues of a different nature in which the organization became involved from time to time. Some of these were of a purely internal, organizational nature, as in a case in which Khare formerly Premier of the Central Provinces was involved (See *IAR* 1938, II, 34-38). But there were other tensions due to graver differences which became manifest after Congress accepted office, and settled down to deal mainly with administrative problems.

In the presidential address at Haripura referred to above, Bose warned the nation that Europe was imminently on the eve of a major conflagration. And it was necessary not to lose this opportunity for the establishment of India's freedom. Bose's ideas were clearly expressed in his correspondence with Gandhi in which he tried to convert the latter into the view that the Congress should forestall by submitting an ultimatum to the British Government to accede to the demand of independence. In one of these letters dated 31 March 1939, he wrote: 'For months I have been telling friends that there would be a crisis in Europe in spring which would continue till summer. The international situation, as well as our own position at home, convinced me nearly 8 months ago that the time had come for us to force the issue of Purna Swaraj. Unfortunately for us and for the country, you did not share our optimism. You are obsessed with the idea of corruption within the Congress. Moreover, the bogey of violence alarms you.

'I do not think that taking India as a whole, there is more corruption today than before and so far as violence is concerned, I feel sure that there is far less of it today than before.

'For these and other reasons, we should lose no time in placing our National Demand before the British Government in the form of an ultimatum. The British Government will

either respond to our demand without a fight—or, if the struggle does take place in our present circumstances, it cannot be a long-drawn one. I am so confident and so optimistic on this point that I feel that if we take courage in both hands and go ahead, we shall have Swaraj inside of 18 months at the most' (see correspondence published in the *Hindusthan Standard* of 14 May 1939, also presidential address at Tripuri in IAR 1939, I, 325-327).

Gandhi's reading was however different. There was no sign of an adequate non-violent atmosphere. On the contrary, things looked discouraging on several fronts. Violence had raised its head in Ranpur in the States People's Movement ; in Kanpur between Shias and Sunnis of Mussalmans, and so on. The Congress organization had become flooded by 'bogus' members ; falsehood and indiscipline were in evidence everywhere. If, under these circumstances, Congress tried to initiate a civil disobedience movement, violence would break out in a form which would render it difficult to marshall the non-violent strength of the masses.

The difference between Bose and Gandhi became accentuated ; and the Congress 'High Command', as it was nicknamed about that time, tended to side with Gandhi rather than with Bose ; although it is questionable how far this was because they subscribed to Gandhian ideas about non-violence. In any case, the cleavage became acute during the presidential election for the Tripuri session of the Congress in 1939.

In course of the campaign for election, while Bose was still in office as Congress President, he publicly accused the 'High Command' of a secret desire to accept the Federation, i.e. to come to terms with the British Government. This was undoubtedly unfair to his own Cabinet, unless convincing proofs were available. In the latter event, the guilty members of the Working Committee should have been properly dealt with ; otherwise, in the fairness of things, the charge had to be withdrawn.

In any case, the election was won by Bose, when Gandhi came forward with a statement that the victory signaled a defeat of the ideas which he personally represented. Therefore,



he advised withdrawal of those who represented his views in the Congress Working Committee. Bose was, at the same time, advised to form a homogeneous Working Committee or Cabinet of his own, and not to try to include within it members 'against whom he had neither proved a grave charge nor withdrawn it.' Bose, however, insisted upon a coalition; particularly in view of a resolution passed at Tripuri to the effect that any Working Committee should enjoy the prior approval of Gandhi.

It transpired in the subsequent correspondence that Gandhi had no prior knowledge about this 'Pant Resolution'. 'The more I read it', he wrote to Bose, 'the more I dislike it'; and he therefore urged upon Bose to disregard the resolution and form his own Cabinet. Things dragged on thus for some time, until Bose eventually resigned. Soon afterwards he initiated a bloc of Leftists within the Congress in May 1939. The next Congress was held in Ramgarh with Abul Kalam Azad as President; while Bose held at the same place, the All India Anti-Compromise Conference on 14 March 1940

These were exciting times as well as painful times: exciting because Europe was caught in the maelstrom of another world war, and painful because the cleavage in the Congress leadership frequently began to slide down from political to personal levels.

The issues however tended to remain unclear. On one side was ranged Bose with his socialistic nationalism, while he looked upon mass satyagraha as a means of limited potentiality. On the other side was Gandhi with a sundry assortment of co-workers, some of whom had recently become converts to constitutionalism, while others subscribed to satyagraha as a means of political action, but hardly accepted its economic counterpart.

There were others again like Jawaharlal Nehru who was different from others, 'socialistic' or republican' in political sympathies; to whom non-violence was a 'decent' means, but something which was unclear in its political implications, except negatively. Yet, it was to this that he owed allegiance, principally because his allegiance was to its leader who had proved his ability to represent and lead the masses in battle.

'To this last group also belonged Maulana Abul Kalam Azad who put up with the fads of Gandhi because of his respect for a leader who was in the vanguard of India's battle for freedom.

It was curious to see forces thus arranged on two opposing sides in India's national organization. But it is natural for a national organization to bear this character until distinctions become accentuated by extraneous or superior forces. This actually happened when India became involved along with the rest of the world in the second world war.

## **War, Congress and Gandhi**

### **(a) The First Stage**

When war broke out and India was declared as one of the belligerent nations by the British Government, the Working Committee expressed its strong disapproval. The additional reasons were that Ordinances had been promulgated, the Government of India Act amended, and other measures adopted which vitally affected the Indian people and circumscribed and limited the powers of the provincial government. All this had been effected without the consent of the Indian people, whose declared wishes had been deliberately ignored.

The Committee then invited the British Government to declare in unequivocal terms what their war aims were, and how such aims were to be applied in the case of India in the immediate present (CB, 25: September 1939, 9 and 13).

There was also a meeting between the Viceroy and Gandhi after which a statement was issued by the latter in which it was said: 'The vital difference between the Congress demand and the Viceroy's offer consists in the fact that the Viceroy's offer contemplates final determination of India's destiny by British Government whereas the Congress contemplates just the contrary. The Congress position is that the test of real freedom consists in the people of India determining their own destiny without any outside influence . . . .

'So far as Defence is concerned, surely it will be the primary concern of free India to make her own arrangements..

If I could carry India with me, I would want nothing beyond a police force for protection against dacoits and the like. But

so far as Defence is concerned unarmed peaceful India would rely on the good-will of the whole world. But I admit that that is only a dream at the present moment' (*H*, vol. vii, 441).

The Viceroy also made a declaration which was considered wholly unsatisfactory by the Congress. The Working Committee therefore decided on 23 October 1939 that 'as a first step' the Congress Ministries should tender their resignation (*CB*, 9 December 1939, 3). This was soon given effect to ; and it is interesting that the Muslim League called upon all Mussalmans and other minorities in India to observe a Deliverance Thanksgiving Day on 22 December 1939 (see particularly General Secretary of Congress's report in *IAR* 1940, I, 261ff.).

On his own part, Gandhi felt more acutely than ever before that the Congress must make up its mind about non-violence. So long, the two had been associated in problems of economic reconstruction and of constitutional rights, when many Congressmen had been, more or less, in agreement with him. Defence had never been an issue ; and now was the occasion when the implications of his association with the Congress had to be finally clarified.

The *Harifan* was mainly used for educating the public in this respect ; and in a conversation with a missionary and pacifist, he explained that 'the charkha and handicrafts occupy a special place in a non-violent society, as centralised activities do in modern society constructed on militarism . . . . So long as non-violence is a purely political battle-cry, India cannot make a solid contribution to the peace of the world' (*H*, vol. vii, 447). In an article entitled 'The Charkha', he wrote : 'For non-violent defence, society has to be so constructed that its members may be able as far as possible to look after themselves in the face of an invasion from without or disturbances from within . . . . Society based on non-violence can only consist of groups settled in villages in which voluntary co-operation is the condition of dignified and peaceful existence. A society which anticipates and provides for meeting violence with violence will either lead a precarious life or create big cities and magazines for defence purposes. It is not unreasonable to presume from the state of Europe that its cities, its

monster factories and huge armaments are so intimately inter-related that the one cannot exist without the other' (*H*, vol. vii, 410-411. Also see 'The Dissentients' in *ibid.*, 418). 'For twenty years I have been preaching that without the Charkha, Satyagraha cannot be started' (*IAR* 1940, I, 230).

From some of the articles, it appeared that he was not quite successful in converting the Congress to his point of view. Thus he wrote on 30 September 1939 : 'Though I have failed with the Working Committee in persuading them at this supreme moment, to declare their undying faith in non-violence as the only sovereign remedy for saving mankind from destruction, I have not lost the hope that the masses will refuse to bow to the Moloch of war but will rely upon their capacity for suffering to save the country's honour' (*H*, vol. vii, 285). 'The Congress will be lost in the crowd if it wears the same old outworn armour that the world is wearing today' (*ibid.*, 304).

#### (b) *Revision of Congress Policy*

Events followed one another in swift succession in the European theatre of war, while the stalemate continued as before in India. The Congress, therefore, made a new move.

It stated that if Great Britain acknowledged that the only solution of the political impasse lay in a recognition of Indian independence, and as a preliminary step thereto, a provisional National Government were constituted at the Centre, such as would command the confidence of all elected members of the Central Legislature, which would also secure close co-operation of responsible government in the provinces, it would enable the Congress to throw in its 'full weight for the effective organisation of the Defence of the country' (*IAR* 1940, II, 176-177).

C. Rajagopalachari was known to be the author of this new proposal. He had succeeded in converting the majority of the Working Committee to his proposal. Rajagopalachari explained at a public meeting in Madras on 19 July 1940 that 'the Congress would be winding up its claim for assuming the actual functions of government on behalf of the people, if India should declare that she shall have no use for the use of violence'. Later on, in a Press statement on 22 July 1940, he

also stated that 'the declaration of freedom that we demand does not mean a withdrawal from the British plan of action' (JAR 1940, II, 80).

The Working Committee's proposal made at Wardha was confirmed by the A. I. C. C. in its meeting at Poona on 27-28 July 1940. On that occasion, President Abul Kalam Azad made an important announcement to the effect that the majority were in favour of the proposal, while the following continued to subscribe to the views held by Gandhi, namely, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Rajendra Prasad, Prafulla Chandra Ghose, J. B. Kripalani and Shankarrao Deo. In his speech, he said :

'It is hardly four months and two weeks since we met at Ramgarh but during this short period, the world had changed almost out of recognition. This change was not only in respect of outward form but it had almost brought about a revolution in ideas and beliefs. It would not be possible for us not to be affected by all that had happened and, therefore, it becomes our duty to review our own position and take stock of the situation with a view to seeking what changes we should make in our own attitude.

'Two important decisions of the Congress Working Committee are to be placed before you. One of these is known as the Wardha Statement. Although there is nothing new in it, as it relates to the basic policy of the Indian National Congress, it becomes our duty to consider it as this House represents the Congress.

'It was not at the Wardha meeting in June last that Mahatma Gandhi raised the question of non-violence for the first time. He had raised it two years ago. In September 1938 the All India Congress Committee met at Delhi. At that meeting of the Congress Working Committee Mahatma Gandhi raised the issue of extending the principle of non-violence which the Congress had followed in regard to its internal policy for the last twenty years to other spheres.

'Mahatma Gandhi wanted the Congress at this stage to declare that a free India would eschew all violence and would have no army to defend the country against aggression. The

Congress should thus depend entirely upon non-violence for the purpose of dealing with internal disorders and external aggression. Mahatma Gandhi felt that he had to give the message of non-violence to the world and if he could not persuade his own countrymen to accept it, it would be difficult for him to preach it to others. The Congress Working Committee felt itself unable to accept this position and explained its difficulties to Mahatma Gandhi. The issue however did not assume any serious proportions then as the Munich Agreement postponed war.

'The question was again raised by Mahatma Gandhi when war broke out in September last. In November last when Gandhi went to interview the Viceroy he asked me and other members of the Working Committee to relieve him of the responsibility of guiding the Congress policy and leave him free to pursue in his own way the policy of non-violence. The Committee, however, once again persuaded Mahatma Gandhi to postpone decision. At Ramgarh Mahatma Gandhi raised this question for the third time. On this occasion Mahatma Gandhi also referred to other weaknesses in the Congress organization and expressed a desire to be relieved of responsibility. This came as a shock to the Working Committee and if I had not practically forced Mahatma Gandhi to postpone decision of the issue once again, a crisis would have arisen as early as at Ramgarh.

'You will thus see that this issue has been hanging fire for over two years and when we met in Wardha in June last Mahatma Gandhi wanted the Committee to make up its mind once for all, as the international situation had become delicate and he felt that a decision on such a vital issue could not be postponed any longer. Even then I tried to persuade Mahatma Gandhi once again to postpone the matter as I knew the dangers and the difficulties of a decision. There is not a soul in the Congress who is not anxious to go the whole length with Mahatma Gandhi . . . but we cannot close our eyes to hard facts. We know that arms and ammunitions have not been able to save the freedom of France, Holland, Belgium and Norway but we also know that human nature even after realising the futility of armed resistance is not prepared to give

up force. If we did it would be wrong on our part. Mahatma Gandhi has to give the message of non-violence to the world and, therefore, it is his duty to propagate it but we have to consider our position as the representatives of the Indian Nation meeting in the Indian National Congress. The Indian National Congress is a political organisation pledged to win the political independence of the country. It is not an institution for organizing world peace. . . . Most of us felt that we were not able to take up the grave responsibility of declaring that we would completely eschew violence when we had to deal with widespread internal disorders in this country or external aggression. But we all were quite clear in our minds that so far as the struggle for winning our independence was concerned non-violence would continue to occupy the same place in the Congress programme that it had occupied all these 20 years. We all felt that the slightest deviation in this respect will mean political suicide for the Congress' (CB, 7 September 1940, 2-5).

### (c) *Individual Civil Disobedience*

The Congress offer did not however evoke a favourable response. In a speech on 7 August 1940, the Viceroy indicated that he was prepared to invite a number of representative Indians to join the Executive Council. A War Advisory Council was also to be established ; but there was no reference to the political aspects of the Congress offer. All that was proposed was a matter of administrative arrangement.

The A. I. C. C. met again in Bombay on 15-16 September 1940 when a 'Satyagraha Resolution' was moved by Jawaharlal Nehru and seconded by Vallabhbhai Patel. It stated : 'In order to end the deadlock in India and promote the national cause, in co-operation with the British people, the Working Committee, even at the sacrifice of Mahatma Gandhi's co-operation, made a proposal to the British Government . . . . This proposal was rejected . . . . At this grave crisis in the movement for national freedom, the All India Congress Committee, therefore, requests him (Gandhi) to guide the Congress in the action that should be taken . . .

'In view of certain misapprehensions that have arisen in regard to the Congress policy of non-violence, the A. I. C. C. desire to state this afresh, and to make it clear that this policy continues, notwithstanding anything contained in previous resolutions which may have led to these misapprehensions. This Committee firmly believes in the policy and practice of non-violence not only in the struggle for Swaraj, but also, in so far as this may be possible of application, in free India . . . A free India will therefore throw all her weight in favour of world disarmament and should herself be prepared to give a lead in this to the world' (IAR 1940, II, 212-213).

In the speech which followed, Gandhi explained that the language of the resolution was mainly his ; but Jawaharlal Nehru had taken his place as the draftsman of the Congress. The latter had felt that the resolution was inevitable if the Congress were to prove true to the principle of non-violence (IAR 1940, II, 219). Obviously, the price which Gandhi had extracted for his leadership from Jawaharlal Nehru and others who sided with him, was heavy. The alliance, on this score, was however destined to be short-lived.

About a month went by ; and then Gandhi initiated the Individual Civil Disobedience movement, which was undertaken for the vindication of freedom of speech. Individuals carefully chosen by Gandhi himself were instructed to move from place to place on foot, hold meetings, and explain to the people the implications of the formula which had to be repeated by satyagrahis, namely,

'It is wrong to help the British war effort with men or money. The only worthy effort is to resist all war with non-violent resistance' (CB, 8 January 1942, 87).

This continued for fifteen months, when it was realized by Gandhi that the Congress leaders had withdrawn the Poona offer and asked him to take the lead in satyagraha, not because they had been converted to the non-violent point of view. In a letter addressed to the President on 30 December 1941, he said : 'I discovered that I had committed a grave error in the interpretation of the Bombay resolution. I had interpreted it to mean that the Congress was to refuse participation in the



present or all war on the ground principally of non-violence. I found to my astonishment that most members differed from my interpretation and held that the opposition need not be on the ground of non-violence. On re-reading the Bombay resolution I found that the differing members were right and that I had read into it a meaning which the latter could not bear.....

'You will therefore please relieve me of the responsibility laid upon me by the Bombay resolution. I must continue civil disobedience for free speech against all war with such Congressmen and others whom I select and who believe in the non-violence I have contemplated and are willing to conform to prescribed conditions' (CB, 5 February 1942, 2).

The President accepted the withdrawal of Gandhi from the responsibility imposed upon him at Bombay and explained that the latter 'was opposed to participation in the war on the pure ground of non-violence whereas they were opposed to it on political grounds. Gandhiji had declared that he would not have the independence of India if secured at the cost of non-violence and on the condition that the country should participate in the war. That was not his (Maulana Sahib's position or of those who agreed with him. He was prepared to accept the independence of the country at any time it was available, whether in times of peace or under the shadow of war' (JAR 1942, I, 280 )

In reply, Gandhi tried to explain his view that the right kind of freedom was unobtainable through participation in war. True Swaraj in which the poorest prospered could be built up only by the introduction of non-violence in economic relations. And such a society alone could be defended by non-violence. It could exist only on the good-will of the whole world.

In his speech he said : 'I was not a little perturbed when the Maulana raised me sky-high. I do not live up in the air. I am of the earth, earthy. I am like you, an ordinary mortal made of common clay.

'Had that not been the case, we should not have been able to work together these twenty years. Ahimsa with me is a creed, the breath of my life. But it is never as a creed that I

placed it before India, or for the matter of that before anyone except in casual, informal talks. I placed it before the Congress as a political method, to be employed for the solution of political questions. It may be a novel method, but it does not on that account lose its political character. I tried it for the first time in South Africa—after I found that all the so-called constitutional remedies, with which Congress work in India had made me familiar, had failed. The question there was exclusively of the political existence of Indians who had settled in South Africa as merchants, petty hawkers, etc. It was for them a question of life and death, and it was in dealing with it that this method of non-violence came to me. The various measures that I adopted there were not the work of a visionary or a dreamer. They were the work of an essentially practical man dealing with practical political questions. As a political method, it can always be changed, modified, altered, even given up in preference to another. If, therefore, I say to you that our policy should not be given up today, I am talking political wisdom. It is political insight. It has served us in the past, it has enabled us to cover many stages towards Independence, and it is as a politician that I suggest to you that it is a grave mistake to contemplate its abandonment. If I have carried the Congress with me all these years, it is in my capacity as a politician. It is hardly fair to describe my method as religious because it is new. . . .

‘Non-violence has brought us near to Swaraj as never before. We dare not exchange it even for Swaraj. For Swaraj thus got will be no true Swaraj. The question is *not* what we will do after Swaraj. It is whether under given conditions we can give up non-violence to win Swaraj. Again, do you expect to win real Independence by abandoning non-violence? Independence for me means the Independence of the humblest and poorest amongst us. It cannot be obtained by joining the war’ (CB, 5 February 1942, 13-17.)

Clearly, Gandhi had arrived at his parting of ways. He had again and again laid down his conditions. They had been accepted half-heartedly, and sometimes even without the conviction which springs from an intelligent appreciation. And now Gandhi pleaded with the Congress finally to make up

its mind in respect of the future. For, as he saw it, the future was dark not only for India but for the whole world. (See particularly Gandhi's speech in *IA*R 1941, II, 195.)

(d) *Quit-India Movement*

Rangoon fell early in March 1942, when the British Government decided to send Sir Stafford Cripps with an offer of political settlement. It was stated that 'the crisis in the affairs of India arising out of Japanese advance had made the British wish to rally all the forces of Indian life to guard their land from the menace of the invader' (*Gandhiji*, 473). The terms were, however, found unacceptable by all parties without exception with the result that Cripps returned to England disappointed. He reported to the Parliament on the circumstances leading to the failure of his mission (see *IA*R 1942, I, 219-265).

Soon after this event, Gandhi received a cable from England, in reply to which he gave expression, for the first time, to the demand for British withdrawal as an immediate necessity (*H*, vol. ix, 214).

In spite of the fact that Congress did not subscribe to Gandhi's ideology, he succeeded in eventually converting even Jawaharlal Nehru to his point of view. There was a possibility that with the withdrawal of British rule, the country might be plunged into anarchy, 'and anarchy may lead to internecine warfare for a time or to unrestrained dacoities'. It was his hope that 'from these a true India will arise in place of the false one we see' (*H*, vol. ix, 166).

In respect of Jawaharlal Nehru, he wrote, 'His personal contacts make him feel much more the misery of the impending ruin of China and Russia than I can . . . In that misery he tried to forget his old quarrel with imperialism. He dreads much more than I do the success of Nazism and Fascism. I argued with him for days together. He fought against my position with a passion which I have no words to describe. But the logic of facts overwhelmed him. He yielded when he saw clearly that without the freedom of India that of the other two was in great jeopardy' (*GC*, 16-17).

But there were two important questions involved if the Congress decided to enforce its will by means of mass civil disobedience. One was about the adequacy of preparation, while the second was with respect to the justice of the Allied cause, and the danger of satyagraha proving a help to the Axis powers. Gandhi tried to furnish replies to these in course of his writings and the numerous interviews which Press correspondents began to have with him when the possibility of mass civil disobedience became known.

A correspondent asked him if the anarchy referred to above was not likely to be 'worse than the present anarchy' of British rule which he had described as an 'ordered anarchy'. To this Gandhi's reply was, 'This is a very proper question. That is the consideration which has weighed with me all these 22 years. I waited and waited until the country should develop the non-violent strength necessary to throw off the foreign yoke. But my attitude has now undergone a change. I feel that I cannot afford to wait. If I continue to wait I might have to wait till doomsday. For the preparation that I have prayed for and worked for may never come, and in the meantime I may be enveloped and overwhelmed by the flames that threaten all of us. That is why I have decided that even at certain risks that are obviously involved I must ask the people to resist the slavery. But even that readiness, let me assure you, depends on the non-violent man's unflinching faith. All that I am conscious of is that there is not a trace of violence in the remotest corner of my being, and my conscious pursuit of *ahimsa* for the last 50 years cannot possibly fail me at this crisis. The people have not my *ahimsa*, but mine should help them. There is ordered anarchy round and about us. I am sure that the anarchy that may result because of the British withdrawal or their refusal to listen to us and our decision to defy their authority will in no way be worse than the present anarchy. After all, those who are unarmed cannot produce a frightful amount of violence or anarchy, and I have faith that out of that anarchy may arise pure non-violence. But to be passive witness of the terrible violence that is going on, in the name of resisting a possible foreign aggression, is a thing I cannot stand. It is a thing that would make me

ashamed of my *ahimsa*. It is made of sterner stuff' (*H*, vol. ix, 184).

The reason why he did not set up a purely non-violent organization instead of depending on the Congress for the execution of his plans was also set forth as follows : 'I adhere to my opinion that I did well to present to the Congress non-violence as an expedient. I could not have done otherwise, if I was to introduce it into politics . . . . If I had started with men who accepted non-violence as a creed, I might have ended with myself. Imperfect as I am, I started with imperfect men and women and sailed on an uncharted ocean. Thank God that, though the boat has not reached its haven, it has proved fairly storm-proof' (*H*, vol. ix, 116).

The other question was equally important, namely, would not satyagraha interfere with the war effort of the democratic powers ? The answer is best indicated in the language of the Working Committee itself. Its resolution of 14 July 1942 taken at Wardha was as follows :

'Events happening from day to day, and the experience that the people of India are passing through, confirm the opinion of Congressmen that British rule in India must end immediately, not merely because foreign domination, even at its best, is an evil in itself and a continuing injury to the subject people, but because India in bondage can play no effective part in defending herself and in affecting the fortunes of the war that is desolating humanity. The freedom of India is thus necessary not only in the interest of India but also for the safety of the world and for the ending of nazism, fascism, militarism and other forms of imperialism, and the aggression of one nation over another.

'Ever since the outbreak of the world war, the Congress has studiously pursued a policy of non-embarrassment. Even at the risk of making its satyagraha ineffective, it deliberately gave it a symbolic character, in the hope that this policy of non-embarrassment, carried to its logical extreme, would be duly appreciated, and that real power would be transferred to popular representatives, so as to enable the nation to make its fullest contribution towards the realisation of human freedom

throughout the world, which is in danger of being crushed. It had also hoped that negatively nothing would be done which was calculated to tighten Britain's stranglehold on India.

'These hopes have, however, been dashed to pieces. The abortive Cripps proposals showed in the clearest possible manner that, there was no change in the British Government's attitude towards India and that the British hold on India was in no way to be relaxed. In the negotiations with Sir Stafford Cripps, Congress representatives tried their utmost to achieve a minimum, consistent with the national demand, but to no avail. This frustration has resulted in a rapid and widespread increase of ill-will against Britain and a growing satisfaction at the success of Japanese arms. The Working Committee view this development with grave apprehension as this, unless checked, will inevitably lead to a passive acceptance of aggression. The Committee hold that all aggression must be resisted, for any submission to it must mean the degradation of the Indian people and the continuation of their subjection. The Congress is anxious to avoid the experience of Malaya, Singapore, and Burma and desires to build up resistance to any aggression on or invasion of India by the Japanese or any foreign Power.

'The Congress would change the present ill-will against Britain into goodwill and make India a willing partner in a joint enterprise of securing freedom of the nations and peoples of the world and in the trials and tribulations which accompany it. This is only possible if India feels the glow of freedom . . .

'In making the proposal for the withdrawal of British rule from India, the Congress has no desire whatsoever to embarrass Great Britain or the Allied Powers in their prosecution of the war, or in any way to encourage aggression on India or increased pressure on China by the Japanese or any other Power associated with the Axis group. Nor does the Congress intend to jeopardise the defensive capacity of the Allied Powers. The Congress is therefore agreeable to the stationing of the armed forces of the Allies in India, should they so desire, in order to ward off and resist Japanese or other aggression, and to protect and help China . . . . .

'Should however this appeal fail, the Congress cannot view without the greatest apprehension the continuation of the present state of affairs, involving a progressive deterioration in the situation and weakening of India's will and power to resist aggression. The Congress will then be reluctantly compelled to utilise all the non-violent strength it might have gathered since 1920, when it adopted non-violence as part of its policy for the vindication of political rights and liberty. Such a widespread struggle would inevitably be under the leadership of Gandhiji' (CB, 1 November 1945, 5-7).

The A. I. C. C. met in Bombay on 7 August 1942, when draft instructions were prepared. The interested reader may consult them in the second edition of *Gandhiji's Correspondence with the Government 1942-1944* (pp. 356-360). But Congressmen all over India were clapped into gaol from the 8th of August onwards.

When the leaders were thus removed, the masses rose in rebellion in various parts of the country. Railway lines and telegraphic communications were interfered with; police stations raided by unarmed masses who walked in ordered formation, while in places like Midnapur, 'national governments' were set up which operated in spite of repression for more than three years. For a factual account for the whole of India except N. W. F. Province and the Punjab, the reader is referred to a book entitled *Rebel India* published in 1946.

In various parts of India, the common people displayed a heroism which was of an unprecedented character. Thus, while long processions of unarmed men and women proceeded in file to take possession of police stations, they were fired upon by the Indian constabulary. Scores were shot dead, many wounded; yet the processions proceeded after brief interruption. In one case, an old woman was shot dead after three rounds of fire; and yet as she died, she held aloft the National Flag with which she had voluntarily marched at the head of the file. She had done so because she did not want young men to lay down their lives while there were people like her with all their age. In a second case, a man had been shot through the spine and fainted. When he recovered he dragged himself on his hands until the

police station was reached. And as he touched the wooden threshold, he said to a comrade who stood near by, 'Tell our captain that we did capture the thana.' Then he breathed his last. (Mitra and Chakraborty 1946, 25.)

Tales of such heroism spread from mouth to mouth; and the word went round that Gandhi had asked everyone to take bullets on his breast, not on the back. In several cases in Midnapur, again, the constabulary who had fired under orders, left immediately after. Perhaps it was too much for them to shoot when they knew that the people belonged to 'Gandhi's army', and had no sinister motive behind them. They were out only to lay down their lives in the country's cause. And when the constables left, the crowd sometimes discovered abandoned muskets in the police station. But as it was 'forbidden by Gandhi' to make any use of firearms the muskets were broken and thrown into nearby tanks.

It was Gandhi and Gandhi everywhere. Although in their anger, the crowd tore up railway tracks, yet no lives were taken. And what was remarkably strange in those eventful times was that the person of 'white-skinned foreigners' was as safe as that of the least Indian. It transpired later on that a few 'imprisonments and even capital punishments' had been meted out 'under orders of the National Government' in Bengal. But it was apparent that the persons involved had been guilty of grievous crimes like insult to womankind.

The point at issue is that unlike every other previous movement in India, the masses rose to great heights of courage while their restraint in the name of Gandhi was also of a remarkable kind.

Similar happenings took place in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and elsewhere. And everywhere it became slowly apparent that the Indian constabulary who were ordered to shoot on unarmed processions were becoming restive. Their own lives were never in danger; and this left them in a guilty frame of mind after orders had been carried out.

As a historian one must however confess that it is difficult to build up with accuracy a picture of happenings in different portions of India. Individual cases of heroism were



occasionally attributed to large bodies of men, and cases of defection were overlooked or forgotten. On the whole, there was a certain amount of romantic adoration which coloured the picture in later times. But one thing is certain.

The masses rose in revolt, and they tried to keep true to what they felt was Gandhi's wish. Although more than 60,000 people were arrested, 18,000 kept in prison, while 940 were shot dead, and about 1,630 injured by firing, there is no record that the common people took lives in return (Mitra and Chakraborty, 7). Their 'violence' was limited to violence to objects which were considered to belong to Government, and it did not extend any further. On its own part, the Government did all it could in order to suppress the rising, and swift measures were taken to keep the supply line open (Tucker 1950, 81).

But one thing became clear. The feeling of helplessness or the surreptitious admiration of Japanese successes which had corrupted the public mind before the Quit-India movement began, had now completely disappeared. There might have been defeat, but the people's forces had succeeded in recovering and preserving their morale. And this was no small gain.

In the meanwhile, the large number of political workers who had been sent into detention, remained where they were until about the end of the war. The political initiative seems to have disappeared, at least for the time being, from Indian hands.

### **Azad Hind Fauj or Indian National Army**

Even before the Quit-India movement began in India, important events had been taking place in South-East Asia which exercised some considerable influence upon political developments in the country in 1945 and 1946.

The reader will recall that shortly before the war began, Subhas Chandra Bose made an attempt to induce the Congress to seize the opportunity for pressing the demand for Indian freedom. For one reason or another, he lost hope that the leaders of the Congress were not prepared to launch another struggle for freedom; they had settled down into 'constitutionalism and reformism' (SB, 23). Of course, their plea was

'non-violence'; and in this, they tended to hold up Gandhi as their adored leader; although it was known that the Congress had already drifted away from the ideas held by the latter.

So, Bose's final attempt was to convert Gandhi himself to the urgency of initiating the final battle for freedom. In the last section of the letter of which a portion has been quoted already (*supra*, 222), Bose appealed to Gandhi thus: 'I feel so strongly on this point that I am prepared to make any sacrifice in this connection. If you take up the struggle, I shall most gladly help you to the best of my ability. If you feel that the Congress will be able to fight better with another president, I shall gladly step aside.' But Gandhi did not agree. His reply was: 'I wholly dissent from your view that the country has never before been so non-violent as now. I see no atmosphere of non-violent mass action. An ultimatum without effective sanction is worse than useless.'

It was not unexpected, therefore, that Bose would be disappointed and even bitter, for according to him a supreme opportunity was being allowed to slip away. He gave vent to his feelings occasionally while presenting a political analysis of the situation in the country. According to him, 'Behind the apparent party struggles within the Congress, there is in reality a class-struggle going on all the time... They (i.e. the Rightists) are afraid that if and when a struggle is launched, the leadership will pass out of their hands' (58, 72 and 71). In a mood of bitterness, he also wrote on 25 November 1939, 'even if Direct Action is started by the present Working Committee, the Left will nurse the apprehension that Chauri Chaura and the Harijan Movement, or rather new forms of them, may appear any time and scotch our movement when it gathers strength and volume' (*ibid.*, 52-53).

When eventually disciplinary action was taken against him by the Congress, he became a rebel and for a time went into political isolation. In January 1941, however, Bose succeeded in escaping from India in spite of keen British vigilance. And once outside the country, he tried to enlist the support of German and then of Japanese forces in the cause of Indian freedom.

The nucleus of an Indian National Army<sup>1</sup> had already been formed in South-East Asia, and when Bose arrived in Singapore on 2 July 1943, he swiftly took steps to reorganize the Army. It was then that he paid glowing tributes to Gandhi. In a broadcast message addressed from Rangoon to the latter on 6 July 1944, he said, 'For Indians outside India, you are the creator of the present awakening in our country . . . The high esteem in which you are held by patriotic Indians outside India and by foreign friends of India's freedom was increased a hundredfold when you bravely sponsored the "Quit India" Resolution in August 1942 . . . .

'Nobody would be more happy than ourselves if, by any chance, our countrymen at home should succeed in liberating themselves through their own efforts or if, by any chance, the British Government accepts your "Quit India" Resolution and gives effect to it. We are, however, proceeding on the assumption that neither of the above is possible and an armed struggle is inevitable. India's last War of Independence has begun. Troops of the Azad Hind Fauj are now fighting bravely on the soil of India and in spite of all difficulties and hardships, they are pushing forward slowly but steadily. This armed struggle will go on until the last Britisher is thrown out of India and until our Tricolour National Flag proudly flies over the Viceroy's House in New Delhi.

'Father of our nation ! In this holy war for India's liberation, we ask for your blessings and good wishes. *Jai Hind*. (Chatterji 1947, 217ff.)

The Azad Hind Fauj continued the war in the east under severe limitations of supply and transport. The Japanese forces had already decided to withdraw, and their aid consequently became progressively<sup>2</sup> restricted. The result was that when Rangoon fell on 29 April 1945, the majority of the National Army decided to lay down arms before the Allied troops. Some of the close associates of Subhas Chandra Bose induced him to leave Burma, somewhat against his will. And then he left for an unknown destination : (cf. Tucker 1950, 50-72 & notes)

Very little was known in India about the adventures of the Indian National Army until after its officers and men

were brought\* up for trial. The trial actually began in Delhi on 5 November 1945. And then, as the story was unfolded, the whole country was swept by unexampled enthusiasm and sympathy for members of the Army. On 3 January 1946, the principal officers were set free ; and by and by the terms of imprisonment of many more were substantially reduced by the British Commander-in-chief of India.

Some disturbances took place in this connection in Calcutta ; but we shall hear more of this afterwards. In the meanwhile, as the story of the I. N. A. became widely known, rumblings were heard among the Indian members of the Police and the Navy, about which a little more has to be said in the next section. The reader who may be interested in the trial of the I N A. personnel is referred to *The Indian Annual Register* of 1945 (vol. II, 194-298). (cf. Tucker 1950, Chs. 4 and 5.)

### **In the Woods : between 1944 and 1946**

#### **(a) Steps taken by Gandhi**

With the progress of the war, India was placed under very severe economic strain. In 1943, famine broke out in Bengal which took a toll of 1½ million lives according to official sources. Non-official agencies were however of opinion that the casualties were about three times as many or more. A summary of the official report prepared under the chairmanship of Sir John Woodhead is available in *The Indian Annual Register* of 1945 (vol. I, 346-349. Also see Santhanam 1944 and Sivaswamy et al. 1945).

There was also widespread complaint of official corruption and inefficiency. Governor's rule,\* which had supplanted Congress rule in the majority of provinces, seemed to have lead the whole country towards misrule and corruption. At the same time, the determination displayed by the people in general in the face of repression, which had become more relentless under conditions of war, was indeed portentous. At any moment, disturbances might break out if leadership were available.

After the happenings of Malaya, Bangkok and Rangoon, restlessness was spreading among the army. The shootings

during the Quit-India movement had also left the Indian constabulary in a not very happy frame of mind.

It was under these circumstances that the British Government felt that there should be an end of the political deadlock in India. There might have been other reasons also, to which we shall revert in a subsequent section.

About this time, Gandhi was laid up with malaria while still in detention. And the Government used this as an opportunity for releasing him. This happened on 6 May 1944. While convalescing in the hills near Poona, Gandhi made an offer to the Viceroy with regard to the political situation. The widespread famine and attendant helplessness of the people stirred him deeply; and in a letter to Lord Wavell he wrote on 27 July 1944 :

'I am prepared to advice the Working Committee to declare that in view of the changed conditions mass civil disobedience envisaged by the resolution of August 1942 cannot be offered and that full co-operation in the war effort should be given by the Congress, if a declaration of immediate Indian independence is made and a National Government responsible to the Central Assembly be formed subject to the proviso that during the pendency of the war the military operations should continue as at present but without involving any financial burden on India. If there is a desire on the part of the British Government for a settlement, friendly talks should take the place of correspondence' (IAR 1944, II, 182).

The offer was however rejected. But it is interesting that public opinion in England after five years of warfare had began to veer away from old into new channels. A letter was published in the *Daily Worker* over the signature of forty-one members of the Royal Air Force to the following effect : 'We cannot but deplore the ignoring of Mr. Gandhiji's recent proposal for a National Government in India which could mobilise India's millions for real war effort along with the other United Nations' (ibid., 178).

At about the same time, Gandhi offered to meet Jinnah in order to come to terms with the Muslim League, if that were possible. This happened in July and September 1944.

The attempt did not succeed. (For text of correspondence, see *JAR* 1944, II, 135-152.)

A number of nationalist leaders accused Gandhi of giving too much importance to Jinnah. But it is interesting that in this he was not alone. A communist leader of the stature of M. N. Roy issued an interesting statement on this occasion. He said :

‘Any other result of Gandhi-Jinnah talks was a matter of wishful thinking. Therefore, the news of the breakdown is not unexpected for those who took a critical and realistic view of the situation.

‘The breakdown, however, is not a political calamity. A great illusion having been at last dispelled, a more practical approach to the problem of India’s constitutional advance should now be attempted. But next to the British that would very largely depend on Mr. Jinnah. He has to give up the idea of coming to an agreement with Hindu India. He must now realise that Hindu India would never accept the Muslim demand of self-determination.

‘All the questions raised by Mr. Jinnah during the protracted talks and evasively replied by Mr. Gandhi can be satisfactorily answered by a democratic coalition composed of the Radical Democratic Party, Scheduled Castes Federation, the Non-Brahmin organisation of Southern India and many other elements outside the two Hindu organisations and their allies and satellites. A democratic coalition will represent the non-Muslim toiling masses, constituting the overwhelming majority of the people.

‘I appeal to Mr. Jinnah to take the initiative in convening a conference of the above popular bodies, which will agree about the future constitution and demand transfer of power to a Provisional Government, based on a democratic coalition. The British, however unwilling they may be to transfer power, will have no plausible excuse to resist the demand of a coalition representing a united front of the majority of the people belonging to all communities. Old parties and leaders have made a mess ; let us open a new chapter if we want to get out

of frustration and avoid a possible civil war' (JAR 1944, II, 157).

There was one more step taken by Gandhi which was of the expected nature. This was his programme of constructive work through which he intended to build up the economic foundation of a non-violent society. He was never tired of repeating his argument ; but somehow it had failed to evoke an intelligent response even from among his followers.

During the meeting of the All India Spinners' Association at Sevagram in September 1944, he is reported to have said : 'he had presented the Congress with the message of the Charkha years ago. The Congress took it up but half-heartedly. Congressmen perhaps felt that they needed his services, and so they put up with the spinning wheel as one of his fads. They mechanically repeated the formula that Swaraj hung on the spinners' thread' (JAR 1944, II, 184. Also cf. *supra* 225).

Regarding Gandhians, he said that 'Many of them had taken to the Charkha because of their faith in him. Faith was good. But he wanted them to combine it with knowledge, so that they could hold their own against skeptics . . . Today, the Charkha Sangh was a highly centralised institution. Tomorrow it would become completely decentralised . . .

'Congressmen would have sought the help and guidance of the Sangh in order to carry the message of the Congress to the villages. Instead he had been faced with the painful spectacle of the Sangh looking up to the Congress for help. He had told them often enough that they should forget politics and concentrate on the wheel with all its implications. That and that alone, he considered, to be true politics, *sattvic* politics. Every village that assimilated the message of the wheel would begin to feel the glow of Independence. Other village industries would automatically follow in the wake of the wheel and so would basic education and serve as a means of quickening the intelligence of the villagers. The whole conception of the Basic Education Scheme was the utilisation of all the bodily faculties in order to quicken the intelligence. All his latest discoveries, e.g. the discovery of village industries,

basic education, etc. had come to him through the contemplation of the spinning wheel. To him the wheel represented a philosophy of life, a living symbol of Ahimsa' (IAR 1944, II, 184 ff.).

(b) *The Policy of Appeasement*

On 21 November 1944, the total number of political detainees was a little over 10,000. They remained where they were ; but members of the Working Committee were set free in June 1945, when the Viceroy announced his intention of inviting the leaders of the country to a conference in Simla. This conference was also attended by Gandhi as a personal invitee. It lasted for a few weeks, and then there was an announcement of its failure on 14 July 1939 (see IAR 1945, I, 239-250). President Abul Kalam Azad squarely laid the blame for failure upon the attitude of the Muslim League (ibid., 241).

But efforts to arrive at a settlement with the League continued without producing fruitful results. In his speech at the Working Committee meeting of the All India Hindu Mahasabha on 20-21 January 1945, Syamaprosad Mukherjee said, 'The C. R. Formula, though powerfully backed by Gandhiji, failed to produce any result as it was nothing but a compromise with an untruth. We hear again of a move for a fresh Congress-League settlement through the efforts of Mr. Bhulabhai Desai, though the detailed plans are not officially known to us. Let me say unhesitatingly that the Hindu-Muslim problem will never be solved by the spokesmen of the Congress bartering away the rights of the Hindus and agreeing to increased percentage of representation to the Muslim League in the Central and Provincial Government either on a higher basis than their population justifies or on a scale higher than what Muslims are entitled to even under the present constitution' (IAR 1945, I, 298. For 'Desai-Liaquat Ali Pact' see IAR 1945, II, 124).

In the meanwhile, Liberal leaders did not remain idle. A 'Conciliation Committee' was formed in New Delhi under the chairmanship of Tej Bahadur Sapru. On 8 April 1945, it tried to present a picture of what India's future constitution should



be like. It is interesting that it proceeded on the basis of 'parity between Hindus other than Scheduled Castes on the one hand and Muslims on the other in the constitution-making body, the future Central Legislature and in the Executive, the overriding condition being that the unity of India and joint electorates are accepted' (IAR 1945, I, 310. For full text see *Constitutional Proposals of the Sapru Committee, 1945*).

### (c) *Popular Demonstration & Congress*

While leaders of various shades of opinion were thus trying to discover a way out of the woods, the country was shaken by a number of popular demonstrations of a rather singular character.

We have noticed already how the 'leaderless' masses acted in 1942, and how also they tried substantially to keep within the bounds of Gandhi's non-violence in as far as they understood the doctrine. When the Congress met again in 1945, the masses were repeatedly congratulated for the courage with which they had 'added a glorious chapter to the history of the fight for independence', although they were 'leaderless and without guidance from the quarters to which they were used to look for help' (IAR 1945, I, 85).

But when disturbances began to take place in various parts of India in the wake of the I. N. A. trial, the attitude taken by the Congress became hesitant or 'moralistic' in tone. In one resolution which was evidently addressed to the British Government after the I. N. A. soldiers had been sent up for trial, the wordings were, 'it would be a tragedy if these officers, men and women were punished for the offence of having laboured, *however mistakenly*,\* for the freedom of India' (IAR 1945, I, 234).

In spite of the implied condemnation, popular disturbances convulsed the country from November 1945 to the end of February 1946. On 11 February 1945, there were serious disturbances for a week in Calcutta. Students organized processions in order to defy a ban against entry into an area occupied by Government offices. Some were killed and many

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\* *Italics, present author's.*

wounded by police fire ; but there was no retaliation against police personnel, and also no turning back. In some parts of the city, angry, unorganized crowds burnt street-cars and military lorries ; but even here, violence was done to property not to persons.

In Bombay, ratings of the Royal India Navy went on strike during the third week of February ; this being followed virtually by a mutiny. There were sympathetic disturbances in favour of the I. N. A. in Madras ; while sepoy in Jabalpur went on a peaceful strike on 27 February 1946 (see IAR 1945, I, 269 ff., 285 ff.' 328, 329). It is also reported that police went on a strike in Bihar, perhaps for identical reasons. (See Tucker 1950, Chs. 6, 7, 21.)

The examples of cool courage and determination which were frequently in evidence in these demonstrations, was proof of the shape in which a non-violent kind of courage had permeated the masses in spite of an attendant violence to property. Even unsophisticated men and women proved capable of rising to great heights in moments of supreme excitement, provided there were some to show the way. People who had tried deliberately to train themselves to leadership in the noble cause of Gandhi frequently failed to attain the height which common folk or raw youth reached, even if these were said to be in the interest of a 'less worthy' cause.

And thus the entire period of political indecisiveness and barrenness which prevailed was swept over by the flood-streams of popular upheaval : they parched a thirsty land. All that happened was that the stream proved to be muddy, even while it was in full flow ; only, the embankments and restraints of non-violence had given in in places. But the feeling of the populace was that hardly anyone trained and disciplined in non-violence seemed prepared to rush into the breach and make use of the passion for freedom and preparedness for self-suffering in order to guide it into channels of organized, massive non-violent action. Gandhi had said in respect of the chances of violence in the Quit-India movement that out of such violence, 'pure non-violence' was likely to emerge (*supra* 235). But the necessary leadership appeared to be absent in the critical days of 1945 and 1946. Under

*Congress leadership*, non-violence became converted into a negative quality, a mere 'absence of violent demonstration'. The organization thus failed.

Inwardly, the ground was being prepared for a further, clearer cleavage between Congress leadership and Gandhi. It began during the dominance of the Swaraj Party, and had become sharpened between 1937 and 1939 when Congress took charge of administration and decided to join the war. But now it tended to sink deeper and deeper.

### British Offer of Settlement

It was at this juncture that the British Government tried to come to terms with Indian political parties. A Parliamentary Delegation, and then a properly constituted Cabinet Mission with authority, was sent to India for the purpose. It is important to remember at this stage that, in spite of the August movement of 1942, the Congress had been unable to score a decisive victory. The uprising of the masses had been, more or less, quelled by superior violence in about six months' time. In 1945, the Congress was not in a mood to take up the battle again; although now that the world war was over, morally there was nothing to prevent it from a renewal of the battle for freedom. Perhaps, the prostrate condition of the masses, laid low by misrule and a 'man-made famine' was one reason for this hesitancy. At least, this was clearly implied by Gandhi in his letter referred to when he made a new approach of political settlement to the Viceroy (*supra* 244, also see *Correspondence 1944-57*, 139-154). But famine notwithstanding, the masses, as we have said, rose in angry demonstrations in various parts of the country in 1945; and there was hardly anyone who dared to rush into the breach and turn the enthusiasm of the people in the direction of an effective non-violent mass struggle.\*

The British Government were not slow in recognizing the present weakness of the Congress. And when it, therefore, made an offer of settlement, it treated the Indian National

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\*Gandhi had done something of the kind while initiating the Salt Satyagraha in 1930. This had been with reference to the terroristic risings of 'militant nationalists' (*supra* 179-180).

Congress, not as India's national organization, but as *one among many political parties with which the land was studded*. The Congress could have refused to accept the position ; but it did not.

Of course, Jawaharlal Nehru said in a speech in Jhansi on 2 March 1946, 'If the Cabinet Mission fails to solve the pressing problems which are clamouring for a solution, a political earthquake of a devastating intensity would sweep the entire country' (*IAR* 1946, I, 41). These were brave words ; but it was certain that sanction, whether violent or non-violent, was entirely lacking. And therefore the British Government succeeded in clamping down the Congress into a position of considerably reduced importance ; while it held up sufficiently tempting terms of settlement before political parties in India.

All through the negotiations which followed, the Congress first resisted and then yielded ; and this happened several times. In every situation, the British Government parried ; but it was not dislodged from the position which it had taken, namely, that the Congress was to be regarded as one among many parties, and the welfare of the 'minorities' was in their special keeping. Indeed, this was a means of maintaining an assault upon the Congress from the rear ; and every time the Congress tried to repair that breach by negotiating with the Muslim League, its offensive in front was substantially weakened. The British proved better in tactics than the fighters of the Indian National Congress. And the harvest, eventually, was reaped by the Muslim League without even paying an adequate price for the sovereignty which was gained for Pakistan.

It is difficult to guess why the British Government wanted to come to terms when nationalist forces in India had not only not scored a victory, but had virtually given up battle in 1945. An analysis was made by Subhas Chandra Bose while he still acted overseas as the Head of the Provisional Government of Free India. It perhaps bears repetition in the present context.

The Viceroy of India, Lord Wavell, released members of the Working Committee and then made his first offer of settle-

ment in July 1945, even while the war was being carried on against Japan in the Far East. In a broadcast message from the Azad Hind Radio, Subhas Chandra Bose said in relation to this offer : 'There are definite reasons as to why the British Government is unable to obtain from Britain itself the necessary fighting men needed for the future campaigns in the Far East. First of all, the British have suffered tremendous losses during the war on many fronts over a period of five years and nine months. As a result the British people are war-weary and British troops are not willing to face another long campaign which will have to be fought under conditions much harder than in Europe. Secondly, unlike the First World War, this war has well nigh brought about the financial bankruptcy of Britain. Owing to the pressure of the colossal demand for war material British industries had to switch over almost entirely to war production. This was not the case with American industries. The result was that during the war Britain has been fast losing her pre-war markets and these markets are steadily going into the hands of American industry. If this process goes on for a long time during the war, then Britain, inspite of an Allied victory, will lose the greater portion of her pre-war foreign trade and will be economically ruined. Owing to this reason British leaders find it imperative to release their factory workers from the fighting forces and war services as soon as possible and thereby re-start peacetime industries. It is absolutely impossible for the British to do both things at the same time, namely, to fight another long campaign in the Far East and to re-start her peacetime industries.

'The Congress is still pledged to the "Quit India" resolution adopted three years ago, and the national slogan for the Indian people since then has been 'Do or Die' in the fight for India's freedom. No Congressman can, consistently with his principles, therefore look at Lord Wavell's offer, not to speak of giving consideration to it. Nevertheless, the fact that so many Congressmen and leaders are actually considering the British offer is because a wave of defeatism has swept over India since the Anglo-American successes in Europe and in Burma . . . . .

'If you my countrymen at home, cannot fight British imperialism with arms, then at least keep up moral resistance to our enemy by refusing to compromise with him or fight his imperialist war. In this connection I want to make an appeal to Mahatma Gandhi, to the President and members of the Congress Working Committee, and to the millions of Congressmen and Congresswomen who stand behind them that they should not judge the international situation wrongly at this critical moment.\* A mistake in appraising the international situation is likely to lead to a wrong step in Indian politics. India is not beaten. We have not fallen yet. The present international situation is not unfavourable to us. On the contrary, it is much to our advantage and will become more so in the days to come. Why then should we think of a compromise now? Why then should we accept the offer which we deliberately rejected three years ago? . . . .

'Sisters and brothers at home, don't you understand why he (Lord Wavell) has rejected the suggestion of Mr. Jinnah to postpone the Simla Conference? To us outside India, the matter is very simple and very clear. The general election in Britain takes place on July 5. The Conservative Party wants to prevent India becoming an election issue. That is why Wavell's offer was flung upon us one month before the general election in England. Nobody knows whether the Labour Party gets a clear majority or not. It will, in any case, emerge much stronger in Parliament after July 5. The Conservative Party is afraid that if the Labour Party comes to power, and if in the meanwhile the Indian problem is not settled, the Labour Party is bound to make another attempt to solve the Indian question. Personally, I do not believe in bargaining because, for me there can be no compromise over India's independence' (Chatterjee 1947, 275-278).

The war came to an end soon after the first offer of settlement was made at Simla. That, somehow, proved abortive; and the blame of failure, as we have seen, was laid upon Jinnah by President Abul Kalam Azad (*supra* 247). Subsequently, the Labour Party won in the general elections of England; and a new offer of settlement was forthwith made to India.

In the present context, it may not be irrelevant to quote portions of Winston Churchill's speech when the decision was made by the Labour Government to transfer power to Indian hands. On 6 March 1947, Mr. Churchill said in course of his speech as Leader of the Opposition : 'The violent eruption of Japan on East Asia, the withdrawal of the United States fleet to the American coast, the sinking of the "Prince of Wales" and the "Repulse", the surrender of Singapore and many other circumstances left us with no assured means of defending India from invasion by the Japanese. We had lost command of the Bay of Bengal and, indeed, to a large extent the Indian Ocean. Whether the provinces of Madras and Bengal would be pillaged and razed by the Japanese at the time seemed to hang in the balance.

'The problem naturally arose with poignant force how best to rally all the Indian elements to the defence of their native land . . . . The offer of the Cripps Mission was substantially this . . . . The offer . . . was not accepted by the political classes of India who alone are vocal and to whom it was addressed. On the contrary, the Congress led by Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Nehru did their very utmost to make a revolt intended to paralyse the communications of our armies in Burma and to help the fortunes of the Japanese. Therefore, the National Coalition Government of those days made a large series of mass arrests of Indian Congress leaders and the bulk were kept in prison to the end of the war . . . .

'In handing over the Government of India to the so-called political classes we are handing over to men of straw, of whom in a few years no trace will remain.

'Yesterday Sir Stafford Cripps and others brought into great prominence Britain's physical and military weaknesses. They asked how she could keep a large army in India for 15 or 20 years. It was a very grave point . . . . If we lack physical and moral strength to wind up our affairs in a responsible, humane and honourable fashion, ought we not to consider the aid or at least advice of the world international organisation which is now clothed with reality and on which so many of us stake our hopes for peaceful progress, freedom and indeed

salvation of mankind ? . . . . I do not think that such aspects should be overlooked in this period of British depression and eclipse' (IAR 1947, I, 171-176. Also cf. *supra* 234).

### **Cabinet Mission Proposal**

#### **(a) *An Outline of the Proposal***

The Cabinet Mission which was properly authorized by the Labour Government, came to India in March 1946. Its purpose was to help Indian political parties to set up an interim government and then in establishing a Constituent Assembly which would frame the future constitution of India. Power would then be transferred to Indian hands by the British Parliament, finally and completely.

With regard to the Constituent Assembly, again, there was a proposal. The provinces of India were to be divided into three Groups, A, B and C, in one of which Hindus were in the majority while in the other two, Muslims. In the first sittings of the Assembly, subjects of Federal importance were to be considered. These included Defence, Foreign Affairs and Communications. After having come to a settlement on these questions, the Assembly was to divide itself into three Groups, and each Group constituted by several provinces was then to frame the rest of their constitution in order to deal with internal, local problems.

#### **(b) *Interim Government***

As a preliminary step, the British Government decided to transfer the government of India to Indian hands. With regard to this question, Gandhi expressed his personal opinion very strongly in letters addressed to the Viceroy. In one such letter dated 13 June 1946, he wrote : 'You must make your choice of one horse or the other. So far as I can see you will never succeed in riding two at the same time. Choose the names submitted either by the Congress or the League. For God's sake do not make an incompatible mixture and in trying to do so produce a fearful explosion' (*Correspondence 1944-47*, 206). In another, addressed on the same day to Sir Stafford Cripps, a member of the Cabinet Mission, he wrote : 'You will



have to choose between the two—the Muslim League and the Congress, both your creations. Every day you pass here coquetting now with the Congress, now with the League and again with the Congress, wearing yourself away. [This] will not do. Either you swear by what is right or by what the exigencies of British policy may dictate. In either case bravery is required' (ibid., 207).

It is interesting, that the Communist Party Memorandum submitted to the Cabinet Mission on 15 'April 1946 stated with reference to the 'establishment of a Provisional Government': 'We think that the best course would be an agreement between the Congress and the League for parity in the Government and for adequate representation to minorities' (IAR 1946, I, 220).

On its own part, the Muslim League was agreeable to participate in it if it were 'to be formed on the basis of the formula : five Muslim League, five Congress, one Sikh and one Indian Christian or Anglo-Indian, and the most important portfolios to be distributed equally between the two major parties, the Muslim League and the Congress . . . the Council (of the M. L.) also reserved the right to modify and revive this policy, if the course of events so required' (Banerjee and Bose 1946, 854).

### (c) *Gandhi on the Constituent Assembly*

The idea of a Constituent Assembly for India had been first proposed at the Faizpur session of the Indian National Congress in 1937. Gandhi had then expressed the opinion that the decision could be taken only if the country was on the threshold of Swaraj, gained by means of its own strength (*supra* 187). There was one other occasion in the early stages of the war when the Congress proposed that the British Government should accede to the demand of a Constituent Assembly. Gandhi wrote then : 'Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has compelled me to study among other things, the implications of a Constituent Assembly. When he first introduced it in the Congress resolutions, I reconciled myself to it because of my belief in his superior knowledge of the technicalities of democracy. But I was not free from skepticism.

Hard facts have, however, made me a convert and, for that reason perhaps, more enthusiastic than Jawaharlal himself. For I seem to see in it a remedy, which Jawaharlal may not, for our communal and other distempers, besides being a vehicle for mass political and other education' (JAR 1939, II, pp. 238 and 247).

But on the present occasion, he saw the framework of the proposed Assembly as containing within it the seeds of separatism. In his opinion, the Grouping was a source of danger. And in an endeavour to find a way out in future if the worst came to the worst, he laid emphasis upon one aspect of the Cabinet Mission's proposal. It had clearly been stated therein that the settlement would not be imposed upon any party. In view of the existing provincial autonomy, he interpreted this to mean that, if any part of India wished to stay out of the Grouping, it could, in terms of the Statement.

Under his influence, therefore, the Congress Working Committee stated in its resolution of 24 May 1946 :

'The statement of the Cabinet Delegation affirms the basic principle of provincial autonomy and residuary powers vesting in the provinces. It is further said that provinces should be free to form Groups. Subsequently, however, it is recommended that provincial representatives will divide up into sections which "shall proceed to settle the provincial constitutions for the provinces in each section and shall also decide whether any Group constitution shall be set up for those provinces." There is a marked discrepancy in these two separate provisions, and it would appear that a measure of compulsion is introduced which clearly infringes the basic principle of provincial autonomy. *In order to retain the recommended character of the statement\**, and in order to make the clauses consistent with each other, the Committee read paragraph 15 to mean that, in the first instance, the respective provinces shall make their choice *whether or not to belong\** to the section in which they are placed. Thus the Constituent Assembly must be considered as a sovereign body with final

\*Italics, present author's.

authority for the purpose of drawing up a constitution and giving effect to it' (Banerjee and Bose 1946, 166).

In reply, the Cabinet Delegation stated on 25 May 1946 : 'The interpretation put by the Congress resolution on paragraph 15 of the statement to the effect that the provinces can in the first instance make the choice whether or not to belong to the section in which they are placed does not accord with the Delegation's intention.

'The reasons for the grouping of the provinces are well known and this is an essential feature of the scheme and can be modified by agreement between the parties' (ibid., 169-170).

Gandhi commented upon the difference thus : 'What about the units ? Are the Sikhs, for whom the Punjab is the only home in India, to consider themselves against their will as part of the section which takes in Sind, Baluchistan and the Frontier Province ? Or is the Frontier Province also against its will to belong to the Punjab called "B" in the statement, or Assam to "C" although it is a predominantly non-Muslim province ? In my opinion the voluntary character of the statement demands that the liberty of individual units should be unimpaired. Any member of the sections is free to join it. Freedom to opt out is an additional safeguard. It can never be a substitute for the freedom retained in para 15 which reads : "Provinces should be free to form Groups with executive and legislatures and each Group could determine the provincial subjects to be taken in common". It is clear that this freedom was not taken away by the authors by Section 19, which "proposes" (does not order) what should be done. It presupposes that the Chairman of the Constituent Assembly at its first meeting will ask the delegates of the provinces whether they would accept the Group principle, and if they do, whether they will accept the assignment given to their province. This freedom inherent in every province and that given by 15(5) will remain intact.

'There appears to me no other way of avoiding the apparent conflict between the two paragraphs as also the charge of compulsion which would immediately alter the noble character of the document. I would therefore ask all those who

are perturbed by the Group proposal and the arbitrary assignment, that, if my interpretation is valid there is not the slightest cause for perturbation' (Banerjee and Bose 1946, 174-175 from *H*, vol. x, 152-153).

The Muslim League's position was stated thus: 'the Muslim League, having regard to the grave issues involved, and prompted by its earnest desire for a peaceful solution, if possible of the Indian constitutional problem, and inasmuch as the basis and the foundations of Pakistan are inherent in the Mission's plan, by virtue of the compulsory grouping of the six Muslim provinces, in sections B and C, is willing to co-operate with the constitution-making machinery proposed in the scheme outlined by the Mission, in the hope that it would ultimately result in the establishment of complete sovereign Pakistan and in the consummation of the goal of independence for the major nations, and all the other people inhabiting this vast sub-continent' (*ibid.*, 191).

The persistence of the Congress in interpreting the voluntary nature of the Cabinet Mission's proposal eventually led the Muslim League to withdraw this proposal of co-operation and launch upon 'Direct Action' for the enforcement of the will of the Muslim 'nation' in regard to its claim of self-determination. This was on 29 July 1946. Part of the resolution ran as follows.

'The Congress have accepted it because their acceptance is conditional and subject to their own interpretation which is contrary to the authoritative statements of the Delegation and the Viceroy issued on May 16 and 25. The Congress have made it clear that they do not accept any of the terms or fundamentals of the scheme, but that they have agreed fully to go into the Constituent Assembly and to do nothing else, and that the Constituent Assembly is a sovereign body and can take such decisions as it may think proper in total disregard of the terms and the basis on which it is to be set up' (*ibid.*, 356).

'Whereas the League has today resolved to reject the proposals embodied in the statement of the Cabinet Delegation

the Viceroy of May 16, 1946, due to the intransigence of the the Congress and the breach of faith with the Muslims by the British Government on the other ; and whereas Muslim India has exhausted without success all efforts to find a peaceful solution of the Indian problem by compromise and constitutional means ; whereas the Congress is bent upon setting up a Caste Hindu raj in India with the connivance of the British ; and whereas recent events have shown that power politics and not justice and fair play are the deciding factors in Indian affairs , whereas it has become adundantly clear that the Muslims of India would not rest content with anything less than the immediate establishment of an independent and full sovereign State of Pakistan and would resist any attempt to impose any constitution, long-term or short-term, or setting up of any Interim Government at the Centre without the approval and consent of the Muslim League, the Council of the All-India Muslim League is convinced that the time has now come for the Muslim nation to resort to direct action to achieve Pakistan and assert their just rights and to vindicate their honour and to get rid of the present slavery under the British and contemplated future of Caste Hindu domination,

‘This Council calls upon the Muslim nation to stand to a man behind their sole representative organisation, the All-India Muslim League, and be ready for every sacrifice’ (ibid., 358-359).

While the Muslim League adopted the resolution on ‘Direct Action’, Jinnah made it clear that ‘The League throughout the negotiation was moved by a sense of fair play and sacrificed the full sovereignty of Pakistan at the altar of the Congress for securing the independence of the whole of India. They voluntarily delegated three subjects (Defence, Foreign Affairs, Communications) to the Union and by doing so did not commit a mistake. It was the highest order of statesmanship that the League displayed by making concessions.’ He continued, ‘I do not think that any responsible man will disagree with me that we were moved by a desire not to allow the situation to develop into bloodshed and civil war. This situation should be avoided, if possible. In our anxiety to try to

come to a peaceful settlement with the other major party, we made this sacrifice of giving three subjects to the Centre and accepted a limited Pakistan' (IAR 1946, II, 178).

Asked if the resolution adopted ruled out the scope of negotiation, Jinnah said, 'What are the other nations doing? Armed to the teeth with atom bombs, are they not going on talking and discussing? Are they not, at the same time, going on with preparations?' (ibid., 181.)

### **'Direct Action'**

'Direct Action', or the War for Pakistan, began in Calcutta on 16 August 1946. There were several reasons for choosing this city for the first round of the fight. The Government of Bengal was in the hands of the Muslim League Party; and, as a preliminary, the Chief Minister of the Province had already transferred all senior Hindu police officers out of Calcutta. Out of 24 key-posts, 22 were held by Muslim and 2 by Anglo-Indian officers. It was difficult to secure petrol in those days; but a very large number of supplementary coupons had been issued in the name of several League Ministers (see Khosla, 46 ff.).

On the 16th itself, there were clashes when organized crowds, armed with staves, daggers, iron rods, etc. paraded the streets and looted or set fire to shops indiscriminately. The Hindu population was not prepared for this kind of organized assault; and when it was discovered that the Police would do nothing, they organized themselves and turned back. Iron railings from all municipal gardens in the Hindu neighbourhood were torn up and converted into weapons. The fact that the Police did nothing was the complaint of one important Muslim League M. L. A., namely, Fazlul Haq (see Khosla, 306-309).

There are several accounts, illustrated with photographs, of the 'Great Killing' of Calcutta in which approximately 6,000 people lost their lives. The most judicious, factual account, not only of the battles of Bengal but of what happened in the Punjab, U. P. and elsewhere is furnished by Gopal Das Khosla's *Stern Reckoning*, published after the independence of India.

Another book carries the tale to after independence. This is a similar report for the Punjab, named *Muslim League Attack on Sikhs and Hindus In the Punjab 1947*, published by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee from Amritsar in 1950. There are also some very clearly partisan reports, like the one written by Lieut-General Sir Francis Tuker who was in charge of the Eastern Command all through the disturbed periods of 1946 and 1947. One does not, however, have a complaint against a British soldier when his heart was aching because the barbarous people of India, particularly the bloated Hindus, ridden through by communism, had no gratitude for all the peace and prosperity which the White Man had unselfishly bestowed upon the land. His sorrow was in 'Quitting India'; and the reasons he gave for this step were that, 'the United States and Russia made it impossible for us to stay; and realising that no true democracy can rule another people, we had, from the days of Macaulay onwards, prepared India for self-government' (Tuker 1950, 505).

The Battle of Calcutta proved indecisive. The Chief Minister of the province was perhaps not quite prepared for the fact that out of the dead, half would be Muslim. So the riots slowed down in the city, and attention was turned to other quarters where there were feebler chances of resistance. Noakhali and Tipperah were districts inhabited by about 80% Muslim and nearly 20% Hindu inhabitants; and about three-fourths of the land and wealth belonged to the Hindu landlords. There had been peasant unrests in the past; and it was comparatively easy to turn this discontent along 'communal' channels. So on 15 October 1946, the second battle was opened in Noakhali. (See Bose 1953, particularly 292-304.) Ex-military servicemen went about with petrol, kerosene (both controlled commodities), looted houses, burnt what they did not take away, and committed crimes on person, or on women which are not unusual when ordinary moral codes are suspended in war. One important political feature of Noakhali was the incidence of mass conversion. Those who were not exterminated, or had not fled, were all converted to Islam until Gandhi came upon the scene on 7 November 1946. In the meanwhile, and within a fortnight of Noakhali, the Hindus of Bihar

retaliated against the 14% Muslims in that province. But there was a difference. While Noakhali was well planned, in which murders were few (about 300\*), the loss to property reached crores, while 10,000 were rendered homeless, Bihar's retaliation was *in blind fury*. More than 5,000 people were slaughtered and property was destroyed rather than looted, the latter generally taking place several weeks after Muslims had fled from their homes. (For Bihar see Khosla, 77-86. Also IAR 1946, II, 200-214. For Garhmukteswar Riots see *ibid.*, 214-215, and Tucker, 170-203. Interestingly enough, Tucker names his chapters thus 'Disturbances in East Bengal', 'The Butchery of Muslims in Bihar', 'The Garhmukteswar Massacre'.)

Of all India's leaders, Gandhi alone recognized that the War for Pakistan had begun in right earnest ; others continued to believe that a settlement with the leaders of the Muslim League was still possible. It was his personal belief that the overall strategy of Direct Action had emanated from the highest quarters in the League command. He felt that the objective was to free several parts of India completely from Non-Muslims (Bose 1953, 69). This was the reason why murders, loot and arson had been accompanied by mass conversion and widespread crimes against women. In Hindu society, it had generally been the practice not to accept women once they had gone through any such misadventure. Gandhi felt that, once large parts of Bengal could be thus made entirely free of Hindus, the Muslim League's hope was that everyone who remained would vote solidly for Pakistan, if it came to a referendum in future.

In fact, during negotiations following C. Rajagopalachari's formula, Jinnah had clearly stated that if there was to be a plebiscite, it must be limited to Muslim inhabitants alone ; the minority would have no say in the matter at all.

And when Gandhi felt that the war was taking a new turn in Noakhali, he rushed into the breach with a very clear objective. He wanted to face the majority community, the

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\* There were cases in which the male heads of families were killed by cutting their throats (*jabah*), while the other members of the family had to stand by, beaten and eventually converted to Islam.



Muslims, and argue with them that they must allow their neighbours to live in peace. His desire was to serve them, and prove that the appeal was to their sense of human brotherhood.

To the Hindus, his appeal was heroic. He wanted every Hindu to remain where he was, as a Hindu. They were to forsake their faith under no kind of pressure whatsoever. If they did not dare to maintain their wives and children in the district, the latter could be sent away to safer places. But those who dared to serve India were to remain even at the risk of their lives.

Gandhi recognized clearly that the Hindus were the professional and propertied classes in Noakhali. He pleaded with them that God had taken away all their property ; and they should avail of this singular opportunity in order to re-organize their lives (see particularly Bose 1953, 142-143 also 147-149). Hindus and everyone else could defend their lawful possession by non-violence alone. But this was possible only if the property were first earned non-violently. Anything gained by violence, like private capital, could not be defended by non-violence ; 'but the latter required the abandonment of ill-gotten gains' (Bose 1953, 98 and 144).

When the President and Secretary of the Hindu Mahasabha came to see him on 5 December 1946, he explained that his prescription was that Hindus should stick to their posts and even face death, if necessary, with courage and willingness. He said, 'I am not going to be a willing party to Pakistan. Even if I fail to prevent it and all Hindus go away, I shall still remain here ; and shall not make a single change in my religious practice.' The President, N. C. Chatterji, said that the scheme was beyond the strength of the average individual ; so, should not Hindus in East Bengal be allowed to segregate themselves in separate villages for safety ? Gandhi's reply was that if they lived in clusters it would really mean accepting the Muslim League's two-nation theory. He also explained, 'if some could die like this, the few shall become many. I am not a visionary as I am generally supposed to be. I am an idealist, but I claim to be a practical idealist.'

And then he made a confession which was of the greatest significance. Explaining the reason why he had rushed into Bengal, he said, 'My own doctrine was failing. I don't want to die a failure but as a successful man. But it may be that I may die a failure' (Bose 1953, 96-97).

And thus Gandhi mounted guard at a point which had given in, on the nationalist side, in this war of Pakistan.\* He alone recognized the battle as battle; while the Congress leaders either did not realize clearly enough what he was aiming at. Only one frankly admitted later on that he did not have the fearlessness which would sustain his hope that the Gandhian method would be enough to turn the fate of the battle in favour of the nationalist forces.

In the meanwhile, Gandhi continued to work in his own way, without, as he admitted, 'the co-operation of the tallest in the land.'

### Interim Government

There was some amount of negotiation between the Viceroy and the Congress leaders on the composition and status of the Interim Government or of the 'Cabinet'. Lord Wavell was not prepared to give it the same status as a 'Dominion Cabinet', when he was to be merely its constitutional head like the King of England. Jinnah was quite clear that 'the Interim Government was not a Cabinet and it was not a Coalition. It was the Executive Council of the Governor-General formed under the Government of India Act of 1919' (IAR 1946, II, 276). While in Noakhali, Gandhi said to the editor of the *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, that 'although he himself was the author of the acceptance (of the invitation of the British Government to the Congress to form the Interim Government), yet he must confess that the Congress had not yet got power, it was acting as the usurper of power' (Bose 1953, 70).

Jinnah twitted the Congress by saying, 'The Congress has asked the British to quit. How can it with self-respect accept the Interim Government which is going to be formed under the Act of 1919?' (IAR 1946, II, 184.)

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\*For an interesting plan of operation in Bihar emanating from Gandhi, see Bose 1953, 103-104."

In any case, Congress did eventually accept the Viceroy's invitation to form the government on 12 August 1946. It actually took office on 2 September 1946. The decision, however, precipitated the 'Direct Action' of the League on 16 August 1946. But the riots notwithstanding, Congress was eager to enlist the support of the League in that government. This was clearly in contravention of Gandhi's advice which was expressed in his letter to the Viceroy on 13 June 1946 (*supra* 255). In a letter written long after to Viceroy Lord Mountbatten, on 8 May 1947, he still maintained that 'the Interim Government should be composed either of Congressmen or those whose names the Congress chooses or of Muslim League men or those whom the League chooses. The dual control of today lacking team work and team spirit is harmful for the country. The parties exhaust themselves in the effort to retain their seats and to placate you' (Bose 1953, 219).

But this is anticipating events. Some time after Congress accepted the offer, the Muslim League also followed, when place was made for them by the resignation of three Congress Ministers. But within a short time, the composite council of ministers experienced great difficulty on account of internal friction.

On 19 October 1946, Ghazanfar Ali Khan, Minister—Designate of the Interim Government declared: 'The disturbances which have occurred in many parts of the country after the installation of the purely Congress Government at the Centre have established the fact beyond any shadow of doubt that the ten crores of Indian Muslims will not submit to any Government which does not include their true representatives. In the Interim Government, all our activities shall be guided by two considerations, that is, to convince the Congress that no Government in India can function smoothly without the co-operation of the Muslim League and that the League is the sole representative organisation of the Indian Muslims. The Interim Government is one of the fronts of the direct action campaign and we shall most scrupulously carry out the orders of Mr. Jinnah on any front that we are called upon to serve' (IAR 1946, 11, 270).

In an outspoken declaration in the Congress Subjects Committee in Meerut, Nehru described his experience of joint working in the Interim Government thus : 'The atmosphere in the new Central Government after the League's entry had become so strained that Congress members had twice threatened to resign. Our patience is fast reaching the limit. If these things continue, a struggle on a large scale is inevitable' (ibid., 47).

Sardar Patel was formerly of the view that 'there is no possibility of a coalition between the Congress and the League as they have diametrically opposed views. Any attempt at a coalition between these two will end in disaster' (ibid., 216). But eventually when Muslim League nominees were accepted, his view was, 'What is being done today is with the object of putting the Congress out of the Interim Government. We shall never allow ourselves to be caught in the act' (ibid., 48).\*

In the meanwhile, the British Government tried to play fair. There was an invitation by Prime Minister Attlee to the Viceroy and Indian leaders for the sake of discussing matters. 'The purpose of the proposed discussion is to endeavour to reach a common understanding between the two major parties on which the work of the Constituent Assembly can proceed with the co-operation of all parties' (ibid., 49).

But on 17 November 1946, Nehru and Patel communicated to the Viceroy that the Congress had decided 'not to accept the Viceroy's invitation to proceed to London for fresh political discussion'. It is however interesting that, on 29 November 1946, Nehru decided to proceed to London 'in response to a personal appeal from Mr. Attlee and on assurance that no modification would be 'made in the British proposals'

\* Patel wrote to Gandhi about this time (January 1947) :

'The charge that I want to stick to office is a fabrication. Jawaharlal now and then hurls idle threats of resigning from the Interim Government. I objected to it, as it only lowers the prestige of the Congress and demoralizes the services. We must make up our mind to resign. Repetition of empty threats has only resulted in the loss of face before the Viceroy, and he no longer takes it seriously' (Gandhi 1957, 206).

(ibid., 49, 50, 299-300). The Viceroy left for England on 1 December 1946, accompanied by Nehru, Jinnah, Liaquat Ali Khan and Baldev Singh. After reaching London, 'Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru declared that India must resolve that, whatever the values of the problems they had to face, their methods and approach should be peaceful and co-operative, even though they might differ from each other' (ibid., 52).

Patel, however, was of opinion that 'whatever efforts at an understanding or settlement are made or whatever interpretations and assurances are given to the Muslim League representatives in England during the present talks, a real understanding between the Congress and the League can only be reached in India' (ibid., 52).

In the meanwhile, very serious riots began in Hazara and spread to other parts of the N. W. F. P. and the Punjab. The battle for Pakistan was now on the western front; and Jinnah's proposed solution was this: 'In view of the horrible slaughters in various parts of India, I am of opinion that the authorities, both central and provincial, should take up immediately the question of exchange of population to avoid brutal recurrence of incidents which had taken place where small minorities have been butchered by overwhelming majorities' (ibid., 296).

### Constituent Assembly

Jinnah's view was that the Constituent Assembly was not a sovereign body. 'It is not going to be a sovereign body by any statement or show of bravado . . . . The Congress . . . are talking through their hats when they talk of turning the Constituent Assembly into a sovereign body—the Constituent Assembly that is being summoned by the Viceroy appointed by the British Government. It is going to be turned into a sovereign body by the bravado and childish statements of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru' (ibid., 168).

The reader will recall that the interpretation of the statement of May 16 with regard to Grouping had been the cause for difference between the Congress and the Cabinet

Delegation. This had also been the reason why the Muslim League had withdrawn its first offer of co-operation.

In a statement dated 6 December 1946, the British Cabinet announced as follows: 'The Cabinet Mission have throughout maintained the view that the decisions of the Sections should, in the absence of an agreement to the contrary, be taken by a simple majority vote of the representatives in the Sections. This view has been accepted by the Muslim League, but the Congress have put forward a different view. They have asserted that the true meaning of the Statement, read as a whole, is that the Provinces have the right to decide both as to Grouping and as to their own constitutions.

'His Majesty's Government have had legal advice which confirms that the Statement of May 16 means what the Cabinet Mission have always stated was their intention. This part of the Statement as so interpreted, must, therefore, be considered an essential part of the scheme of May 16 for enabling the Indian people to formulate a constitution which His Majesty's Government would be prepared to submit to Parliament. It should, therefore, be accepted by all parties in the Constituent Assembly.

'It is, however, clear that other questions of interpretation of the statement of May 16 may arise and His Majesty's Government hope that if the Council of the Muslim League are unable to agree to participate in the Constituent Assembly they will also agree, as have the Congress, that the Federal Court should be asked to decide matters of interpretation that may be referred to them by either side and will accept such a decision, so that the procedure both in the Union Constituent Assembly and in the Sections may accord with the Cabinet Mission's plan.

'On the matter immediately in dispute, His Majesty's Government urge the Congress to accept the view of the Cabinet Mission in order that a way may be opened for the Muslim League to reconsider their attitude. If, in spite of this affirmation of the intention of the Cabinet Mission, the Constituent Assembly desires that the fundamental point

should be referred to for a decision of the Federal Court, such a reference should be made at an early date. It will then be reasonable that the meetings of the Sections of the Constituent Assembly should be postponed until the decision of the Federal Court is known.

‘There has never been any prospect of success for the Constituent Assembly except upon the basis of agreed procedure. Should the constitution come to be framed by a Constituent Assembly in which a large section of the Indian population had not been represented, His Majesty’s Government could not, of course, contemplate—as the Congress have stated they would not contemplate—forcing such a constitution upon any unwilling parts of the country’ (IAR 1946, II, 301-302).

In regard to this statement Jinnah’s question was, ‘Suppose the Federal Court decides against the interpretation of H. M. G. what will the H. M. G. do with regard to the Constituent Assembly ? Is it to proceed on the basis of the interpretation given by the Federal Court contrary to the interpretation of H. M. G. ? In that case the Muslim League could never accept it . . . We don’t want any outside interference in this sense that somebody should tinker with us, but there must be some provision within the scheme itself which will prevent a brute majority taking the bit in its mouth and running away. But to treat it as a sovereign Constituent Assembly taking decision after decision and then presenting the poor Muslim minority, the British Government and the world with a *fait accompli*—there is the real danger’ (ibid., 315-316).

The All-India Congress Committee met on 5—6 January 1947, and decided to accept the long-term plan after the explanation offered by the British Cabinet on 6 December 1946. The resolution stated in part : ‘The A. I. C. C. having considered the events that have taken place in the country since the Meerut Session of the Congress in November last, the statement issued by the British Government on December 6, 1946, and the statement of the Working Committee of December 22, 1946, advises Congressmen as follows :—

‘. . . While the Congress has always been agreeable to making reference to the Federal Court on the question of interpretation in dispute such a reference has become purposeless and undesirable owing to recent announcements made on behalf of the British Government. A reference could only be made on an agreed basis, the parties concerned agreeing to abide by the decision given . . . .’

‘The A. I. C. C. is anxious that the Constituent Assembly should proceed with the work of framing a constitution for free India with the goodwill of all parties concerned and, with a view to removing the difficulties that have arisen owing to varying interpretations, agree to advise action in accordance with the interpretation of the British Government in regard to the procedure to be followed in the Section’ (JAR 1947, I, 114-115)

Purushottamdas Tandon had suggested amendments in the resolution to the effect that ‘the Congress *does not* accept the interpretation put upon the British Cabinet Mission’s statement of May 16, 1946, by the British Government in their statement of December 6, 1946.’ The amendment was however lost by 102 to 54 votes. Jai Prakash Narain had supported Tandon’s resolution. And in winding up the debate, Nehru said, ‘He agreed with Mr. Jai Prakash Narain that the Congress could create an upheaval in the country and thereby gain its objective. But there were internal weaknesses which should be remedied first. Their struggle need not necessarily take the form of a conflict with authority ; it could take some other shape. That was why the Congress wanted to consolidate its own position’ (ibid., 114-115).

In the meanwhile, the Constituent Assembly met for the first time on 9 December 1946 under the chairmanship of Sachchidananda Sinha. Rajendra Prasad was elected permanent chairman, and took office on 11 December 1946.

### **Gandhi and the Constituent Assembly**

Now that Gandhi was in Noakhali, a place difficult to reach from Delhi, the Congress went on negotiating in its own way, and only occasionally made references to him for advice.



None of the Congress leaders were sufficiently interested, or had the time under the stress of rapidly changing events, to strengthen the hand of Gandhi in his war against Pakistan. For it was undoubtedly war in terms of non-violence, pitched against the violence of the Muslim League.

There was a meeting of the Working Committee on 8-22 December 1946. The Constituent Assembly had also started its session just then. In its resolution, the Working Committee reiterated its stand of 24 May 1946, and insisted upon the fact that the Cabinet Mission's statement of May 16 did 'not make grouping necessary'. It also pointed out that the Council of the Muslim League had decided 'that they will not be bound by the decision of the Federal Court, and a demand for the partition of India, which is a negation of the Cabinet Mission's scheme, continues to be put forward . . . an emergent meeting of the A. I. C. C. in Delhi is being convened to consider the latest developments and to give such directions as it may deem fit' (IAR 1946, II, 129).

We have seen, however, that the decision of the A. I. C. C. in this January meeting was 'to agree to advise in accordance with the interpretation of the British Government'. There is a tale behind both these resolutions which has already been told in another book, but which bears repetition in the present context.

It had always been Gandhi's tactics to accept an offer made by an opponent, and put upon it an interpretation which it could be made to bear, but which was to the advantage of the Congress. It was thus that he had always negotiated both with the British as well as with Jinnah. In case negotiations failed and non-violent non-co-operation became necessary again, he wanted the responsibility of failure to lie on the other side. In the present negotiation with the Cabinet Mission, the position was similar. But now the time seemed to be approaching when the Congress should withdraw, and once more go into the wilderness.

So, when one member of the Working Committee was sent to him for advice before the meeting of 8 December, this was the instruction sent to the Committee :

'I am quite clear that if there is a boycott by the Muslim League of the Constituent Assembly, it should not meet under the Cabinet Mission's statement of 16th May. It clearly contemplates the co-operation of two major parties, viz. the Congress and the League. Therefore, if one of them proclaims a boycott, the Constituent Assembly cannot meet with propriety under that paper. If the Government convene the Constituent Assembly in spite of the boycott, they can legitimately do so under some other statement which they can draw up in consultation with the Congress. It should never be forgotten that however powerful the Congress has become, Constituent Assembly as contemplated today can only meet by action of the British Government.

'Even if the Constituent Assembly meets in spite of the boycott, but with the willing co-operation of the British Government, it will be under the visible or invisible protection of the British forces, whether Indian or European. In my opinion, we shall never reach a satisfactory constitution under these circumstances. Whether we own it or no, our weakness will be felt by the whole world.

'It may be said that not to meet as a Constituent Assembly under these circumstances will amount to a surrender to Q. A. Jinnah or the Muslim League. I do not mind the charge because the waiver will not be an act of weakness, it will be an act of Congress strength because it would be due to the logic of facts.

'If we have attained a certain degree of status and strength to warrant us in convening our own Constituent Assembly irrespective of the British Government, it will be a proper thing. We will have then to seek the co-operation of the Muslim League and all the parties including the Princes, and the Constituent Assembly can meet at a favourable place even if some do not join. Thus it may be only the Congress Provinces plus Princes who may care to join. I think this would be dignified and wholly consistent with facts.' (Bose 1953, 94-95.)

This was despatched on 4 December 1946 by a messenger to Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, and through him to the Working Committee.

It is clear from the above that Gandhi recognized, as perhaps no one else in Congress circles did, that the Congress had not yet become strong enough to enforce its will upon the British. But here was a chance ; and if ultimately negotiations broke down, the Congress would be able to gather new strength with a clean conscience.

As the risks involved were however great, Jawaharlal Nehru, J. B. Kripalani who was now Congress President, and Shankarrao Deo came to meet him personally on 27 December 1946.

After consultation, Gandhi handed them over a statement which is reproduced below. It will be noticed that Gandhi dealt in this statement with some of the fundamentals of Congress politics. In the best interests of the masses, his feeling was that the Congress should even now step out of the Constituent Assembly. But let us present the statement itself.

‘During its unbroken career of sixty years the Congress has been invariably and progressively representative of all the communities—Hindus, Muslims and others. It has been also progressively representative of the masses. That it has always had a number of hypocrites is but an ode to these two among its many virtues. If those who represent these two virtues are found to be in a hopeless minority, they should lodge their protest and leave the Congress and influence public opinion from outside. Then only will they be true servants of the nation. Therefore at this critical period I hold it to be necessary for the Working Committee to give the proper, unequivocal lead to the Congress by laying down these propositions :—

1. It is now perhaps late to cry off the Constituent Assembly though I hold it still to be the best course to make the Congress position absolutely clear.

2. The second best is to accept the Cabinet Mission Statement with the joint interpretation of it between themselves and Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah.

3. It must be clearly understood that it is open to any Congress individual or unit to declare his group's or province's secession from the Congress stand, which the Congress should be free to accept whilst still openly guiding the seceding element. This will be in accordance with the Cabinet's position that they will not compel any group or province.

'The result of this would be that the members of Section A would prepare a full constitution in terms of the Cabinet Mission's Statement and B and C Sections would have to frame what they can in spite of the seceders as at present conceived ; Assam in the east and Frontier Province in the west, the Sikhs in the Punjab and may be Baluchistan.

'It may be that the British Government will recognise or set up another Constituent Assembly. If they do, they will damn themselves for ever. They are bound when a constitution is framed in terms of the Cabinet Mission's stand to leave the rest to fate, every vestige of British authority being wiped out and British soldiers retiring from India never to return.

'This position of the Congress is in no way to be interpreted as playing completely into Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah's hands. And if this he considers to be what he meant, the Congress will be thanked by the world for giving Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah a universally acceptable and inoffensive formula for his Pakistan. The Congress dare not shirk the right thing because it completely coincides with his creed.

'The constitution will be for whole India. It will have to contain a specific clause showing in what way it will be open to the boycotters to avail themselves of the constitution' (ibid., 128-130).

Evidently, the A. I. C. C. were not able to abide by this advice, and decided to accept the British Cabinet's interpretation. When the news was broadcast, it was received at night and conveyed by a messenger to Gandhi's camp. When the present author communicated the news, he distinctly remembers that Gandhi said to him, '*Yah to mera khatm ho gaya*' ('This is my end').

There is one more point with reference to the Constituent Assembly which also shows, how, in spite of close co-operation between the leaders and Gandhi, the political cleavage between them was on the increase.

Two members of the Legislative Assembly of Assam came to see him on 15 December 1946. After a fairly long discussion, a report was prepared, revised by Gandhi, and then handed over to them. It read as follows :

"Two Assam friends Shri Bijoy Chandra Bhagavati and Shri Mohendra Mohan Chowdhury saw Gandhi on the morning of 15 December 1946, on behalf of Shri Bardolai. They asked him what Assam was to do with regard to the question of grouping. It was a question of life and death for Assam. They did not wish to be grouped with Bengal. Some people had told them that they would be helping the League, if they stayed out. Assam could not be allowed to stand in the way of the progress of the rest of India and so on. They had asked the Working Committee. There did not seem to be any clear guidance from them. So they had come to him for advice. In reply Gandhiji said, "I do not need a single minute to come to a decision. For on this I have a mind. I am a Congressman to the very marrow. I am mainly the framer of the constitution of the Congress as it stands today. I told Bardolai that if there is no clear guidance from the Congress Working Committee, Assam should not go into the Section. It should lodge its protest and retire from the Constituent Assembly. It will be a kind of Satyagraha against the Congress for the good of the Congress.

'Rightly or wrongly, the Congress has come to the decision that it will stand by the judgment of the Federal Court. The dice are heavily loaded. The decision of the Federal Court will go against the Congress interpretation of grouping as far as I can make out for the simple reason that the Cabinet says (it) has got legal advice which upholds their decision. The Federal Court is the creation of the British. It is a packed court. To be consistent the Congress must abide by its decision whatever it may be. If Assam keeps quiet finish sted.

No one can force Assam to do what it does not want to do. It must stand independently as an autonomous unit. It is autonomous to a large extent today. It must become fully independent and autonomous. Whether you have that courage, grit and the gumption, I do not know. You alone can say that. But if you can make that declaration, it will be a fine thing. As soon as the time comes for the Constituent Assembly to go into sections, you will say, "Gentlemen, Assam retires". For the independence of India it is the only condition. Each unit must be able to decide and act for itself. I am hoping that in this, Assam will lead the way. I have the same advice for the Sikhs. But your position is much happier than that of the Sikhs. You are a whole province. They are a community inside a province. But I feel, every individual has the right to act for himself, just as I have.

'Q. But we are told that the framing of the constitution for the whole of India cannot be held up for the sake of Assam. Assam cannot be allowed to block the way.

'A. There is no need to do that. That is why I say I am in utter darkness. Why are not these simple truths evident to all after so many years? If Assam retires it does not block but leads the way to India's independence.

'Q. The League has said that the constitution framed by the Constituent Assembly cannot be imposed on unwilling units. So if some parts do not accept it, the British Parliament won't accept it.

'Gandhiji flared up at this question. "Who are the British Government? If we think independence is going to descend on our heads from England or somewhere, we are greatly mistaken. It won't be independence; we will be crushed to atoms. We are fluctuating between independence and helpless dependence. The Cabinet Mission's plan lies in between. If we react rightly there will be the full-blown flower of independence. If we react wrongly the blossom will wither away.

"Mind you, the League standpoint is quite correct. If they stand out, the Constituent Assembly cannot impose its

constitution on an unwilling party. The British Government has no say in the matter, one way or the other.

"The British cannot interfere with the working of the Constituent Assembly. Supposing the vast majority including the Muslims and others forms a constitution, you can defy the British Parliament if it seeks to interfere. Power is in your hands. Some such thing has happened in Ireland only recently. And De Valera is no non-violent fighter. The position of India is far better than that of Ireland. (They are still more committed in India than was the case in Ireland.) If we have not the penetration we will lose the advantage we have, as it is apparently being lost today.

"If Assam takes care of itself the rest of India will be able to look after itself. What have you got to do with the constitution of the Union Government? You should form your own constitution. That is enough. You have the basis of a constitution all right even now.

"I have never despised the 1935 Constitution. It is based on provincial autonomy. It has the capacity for fullest growth, provided the people are worth it. The hill people are with you. Many Muslims are also with you. The remainder can be too, if you act on the square. You will have to forget petty jealousies and rivalries and overcome your weaknesses. Assam has many weaknesses as it has much strength, for I know my Assam."

"With your blessings we can even go outside the Congress and fight," the friends put in.

'Gandhiji replied that "in 1939 when there was the question of giving up the Ministry, Subhas Bose opposed it as he thought Assam's was a special case. I told Bardolai that there was much in what Subhas Babu had said and although I was the author of that scheme of boycott, I said Assam should not come out, if it did not feel like it. But Assam did come out. It was a mistake."

'The friends said, "Maulana Saheb had then said that exception could not be made in the case of Assam."

'Gandhiji said, "Here there would have been no question of exception. People would have said, 'Assam rebelled and that civilly' But we have that slavish mentality. We look to the Congress and then feel that if we do not follow it slavishly, something will go wrong with it. I have said that not only a province but even an individual can rebel against the Congress and by doing so serve it, assuming that he is in the right. I have done so myself. Congress has not attained the present stature without much travail. I remember in 1918, I think, there was the Provincial Conference of the Congress at Ahmedabad. The late Abbas Tyabjee Saheb was in the chair. All the old guards were there, Ali Brothers had not yet joined hands with me fully then, as they did later on. The late (V. J.) Patel was there. I moved the non-co-operation resolution. I was a non-entity then. A constitutional question arose. Could a provincial conference anticipate the decision of the Congress. I said, yes. A provincial conference and even a single individual could anticipate the Congress for its own benefit. In spite of the opposition of old hands the resolution was carried. That paved the way for the Congress to pass a similar resolution at Calcutta. India was dumb-founded at the audacity of a provincial conference passing the revolutionary resolution.

"We had formed the Satyagraha Sabha outside the Congress. It was joined by Horniman, Sarojini Devi, Shankarlal, Umar Sobhani, Vallabhbhai—the mischief-making Sardar. I was ill. The Rowlatt Act was passed. I shook with rage. I said to the Sardar, I could do nothing unless he helped. Sardar was willing. And the rest you know. It was rebellion, but a healthy one. We celebrate the 6th of April to the 13th. (That is how India was born. It was a rebellion against the Congress, but the Congress gained by that.) You have all these historical instances before you.

"I have given you all this time to steel your hearts, to give you courage." If you do not act correctly now, Assam will be finished. Tell Bardolai I do not feel the least uneasiness. My mind is made up. Assam must not lose its soul. It must uphold it against the whole world. Else I will say



that Assam has only manikins, no men. It is an impertinent suggestion that Bengal should dominate Assam in any way."

"The friends asked if they could tell the people that they have rebelled against the Congress with Gandhiji's blessings.

"Talk of God's blessings", said Gandhiji. "They are richer. Tell the people (Assam won't lose its identity. We shall stand by the right) even if Gandhi tries to dissuade us, we won't listen." "

## March of Events

### *(a) Shifting of Objective*

While Gandhi thus continued to counsel Congressmen about what should be done with regard to the Cabinet Mission's proposal, his own work went on in Noakhali. But he confessed that there was nothing but darkness all around.

Noakhali had been followed by Bihar, and Bihar by disturbances in the Punjab.\* While the Muslim League made a great case out of the 'butchery' in Bihar, and there was considerable exaggeration, Gandhi's instruction to all Congressmen and to journalists in general was to abide by the truth in the strictest sense possible.

'The Official Statement and Resolution of Bihar Provincial Muslim League on the Bihar Massacre of 1946' published by the General Secretary of the Provincial Muslim League, Patna, carried the following facts' in its report entitled 'The Bihar State Killing 1946. What Hindu Congress Fascism has done in Bihar.'

1. Over fifty thousand Muslims slaughtered and burnt alive.
2. Over five lakhs (half a million) rendered homeless refugees.
3. Crores (billions) of property looted and destroyed.

\* See Working Committee's resolution of 6-8 March 1947 in *IAR* 1947, I, 118 also p. 124 for an account by the President. For Nehru's review of happenings in Rawalpindi, Multan, Amritsar, Calcutta, Noakhali, Bihar etc., see *ibid.* p. 134.

4. Invaluable libraries, rare manuscripts and cultural monuments, mosques and copies of Quran burnt.
5. Thousands forced to shudhi, slavery and life of shame.
6. Eighty percent of victims women and children.'

In contrast, Gandhi said in regard to Noakhali that there had undoubtedly been an exaggeration in the number of men murdered. (Bose 1953, 69.) His volunteers were instructed to make house to house visits, and ascertain with as much accuracy as possible, the real facts of the case. Wherever possible, he personally went to verify the facts (cf. *ibid.*, 238).

The propaganda use made of the riots by the Muslim League should not however be taken as a matter of complaint. In every war, the feelings of the combatants are maintained at a high pitch by means of 'atrocities stories'. This is as true of civilized nations of the West as of communities in India who had allowed themselves to sink into a low level of barbarity.

What is indeed of importance in the wordy warfare which was waged alongside the outbursts of popular violence was that the British Government placed a pressure upon the Congress and the League to come to terms with one another *before* power could be transferred. Indeed, the proposal of 'Grouping' was in itself a built-in mechanism for the accommodation of Pakistan, even while preserving a facade of unity by means of a federal centre, which had however no right in regard to internal affairs of states or groups of states. The Congress Government had a weak conscience; because the mentor, Gandhi, was always prepared to confess weaknesses on its behalf; although, with him, this was meant to be a step for advancement after putting one's own house in order. (See, for instance, Bose 1953, 166 ff.) The Muslim League, in contrast, had no such qualms; and it utilized with efficiency whatever could be turned into grist for the mill of Pakistan.

The challenge of the British Government, and its insistence upon acceptance of the statement of May 16 in toto, and according to the interpretation put upon it by the Cabinet,

achieved one thing of great strategic importance. It deflected the Congress leaders from their prime objective, and made them engrossed in the preliminary condition laid down by their opponents for final transfer of power.

As soon as Gandhi realized that his *inner defences were thus giving way*, he did everything in his power to keep the Congress leaders steady in their aim of forcing the issue of 'Quit India'. His argument was that the Congress and League must be left free to come to terms between themselves, and without the intervention of the British. But the British were adamant, for they held that the welfare of the minorities was their special concern; and the Congress leaders more or less conceded them that point in contravention of Gandhi's counsel.

Lord Mountbatten succeeded Lord Wavell as Viceroy on 24 March 1947. A meeting took place between him and Gandhi on 31 March 1947, when Gandhi made an offer that the Interim Government should be recast, and the Muslim League invited to take entire charge of it. In case of refusal, the offer should be made without change to the Congress. (See Menon 1957, 352-353.) The British advisers of Mountbatten shied at the offer; and so did the Congress leaders. Vallabhbhai Patel had already decided that, in case of division of the country, he was going to demand a division of the provinces of Bengal and Punjab as well (see *ibid.*, 353-355). Patel was opposed to Gandhi's proposal, because a League Government at the centre would give it power to ruin the Constituent Assembly which was already functioning.

In any case, Gandhi's new move to create a situation failed; while the demand for partitioning Bengal and Punjab, in case the League was satisfied with nothing less than the division of the country into two, gained more and more adherents within Congress circles and outside.

In the meanwhile, riots continued in the Punjab, and an official statement dated 20 March 1947 stated that '2,049 persons had been so far killed and 1,103 seriously injured in the recent disturbances in the Punjab' (JAR 1947, I, 48). Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, visited the scene, and expressed in strong emotional language the degradation to which people had reduced themselves. The political objectives seemed to

have become overshadowed in his mind by the sight of bloodshed and brutality. Perhaps something else was also rankling in his mind. The Congress organization as such had been clearly found incapable of tackling the riot situation either in Bengal or Bihar, or in the Punjab. Troops had to be called in for the restoration of peace. And it was also felt that, with the continuance of communal riots, the Services and the Army were likely to be affected adversely. The Army was free up to now from communalism ; but how long could it remain so when members of the armed forces, Sikh, Hindu or Muslim, were all likely to lose their kin in the mad orgy which was slowly engulfing the land ?

*(b) Argument for Division of India*

When Gandhi was bypassed by the Congress, Mountbatten made every endeavour to win over Nehru and the rest of the Working Committee to his side. Evidently, his arguments were that unless the country was divided and each State had a dependable bit of the Army and of the Services, India would be torn into pieces, just as China had been by its war-lords. There were in India more than 600 princely States which might proclaim sovereignty on British withdrawal.

If, however, Congress and the League could not come to a settlement, the British would, in any case, leave power in the hands of all units to whom transfer appeared reasonable to them. As an alternative, transfer could be rendered smooth if both parts of India agreed to remain as Dominions within the British Commonwealth, at least, in the initial stages. (See Menon 1947, 359.)

The offer sounded reasonable enough to Nehru. But two forces might undo the plan ; at least this was how Mountbatten must have felt about it. One was an opposition from Jinnah who might refuse to accept a truncated Pakistan. The other was Gandhi, who might undo the plan in some unforeseen way altogether.

So the Viceroy proceeded cautiously. He loaded his proposal of division with the possibility of a transference

of power earlier than the promised date of June 1948. This was very tempting to the Congress leaders, particularly after their experience of non-co-operation by the League Ministers within the Interim Government. They wanted to free themselves from the League's companionship as quickly as possible. When the Congress leaders were in this frame of mind, the Viceroy asked them, what would happen if Gandhi opposed. Vallabhbhai Patel is reported to have assured him that 'Gandhi would abide loyally by any' decision taken' (Campbell-Johnson 1952, 104).

Mountbatten dealt with Jinnah in quite another way. If partition came, Jinnah was likely to gain something which neither he nor the League had ever dreamt of. But if an objection was raised by him on account of the division of Bengal and Punjab, Mountbatten took care by arming himself with a letter from Churchill to Jinnah in which the former stated 'that it was nothing less than a matter of life and death for Jinnah to accept the Plan' (Campbell-Johnson 1952, 97).

(c) *Gandhi tries to defend the citadel alone*

There had been one more meeting between Mountbatten and Gandhi in the first week of May 1947. By that time, the Congress leaders had virtually been won over by the Viceroy. And when the present writer met Gandhi on the train two days later, the latter spoke to him as follows.

Gandhi : Mountbatten had the cheek to tell me, 'Mr. Gandhi, today the Congress is with me and no longer with you'

Bose : But what did you say in reply ?

Gandhi : I retorted, 'But India is still with me.'\*

While on the same journey, Gandhi wrote a letter to the Viceroy in which he tried desperately to keep the British fixed upon their single duty, namely, of quitting India. The letter was as follows :

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\*This conversation was first reported in Louis Fisher's *Gandhi : His life and Message for the World*, Signet Key Book, 1954, p. 171.

On the train to Patna,

8-5-1947

Dear Friend,

It strikes me that I should summarise what I said and wanted to say but left unfinished for want of time, at our last Sunday's meeting.

Whatever may be said to the contrary, it would be a blunder of first magnitude for the British to be party in any way whatsoever to the division of India. If it has to come, let it come after the British withdrawal, as a result of understanding between the parties or an armed conflict which according to Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah is taboo. Protection of minorities can be guaranteed by establishing a court of arbitration in the event of difference of opinion among the contending parties.

2. Meanwhile the Interim Government should be composed either of Congressmen or those whose names the Congress chooses or of Muslim League men or those whom the League chooses. The dual control of today lacking team work and team spirit is harmful for the country. The parties exhaust themselves in the effort to retain their seats and to placate you. Want of team spirit demoralises the Government and imperils the integrity of the services so essential for good and efficient government.

3. Referendum at this stage in the Frontier (or any province for that matter) is a dangerous thing in itself. You have to deal with the material that faces you. In any case nothing should or can be done over Dr. Khan Sahib's head as Premier. Note that this paragraph is relevant only if division is at all to be countenanced.

4. I feel that partition of the Punjab and Bengal is wrong in every case and a needless irritant to the League. This as well as all innovations can come after the British withdrawal, not before, except always for mutual agreement. Whilst the British Power is functioning in India, it must be held principally responsible for the preservation of peace in the country. That machine seems to be cracking under the existing strain which

is caused by the raising of various hopes that cannot or must not be fulfilled. These have no place during the remaining thirteen months. This period can be most profitably shortened if the minds of all were focussed on the sole task of withdrawal. You and you alone can do it to the exclusion of all other activity so far as the British occupation is concerned.

5. Your task as undisputed master of naval warfare, great as it was, was nothing compared to what you are called to do now. The single-mindedness and clarity that gave you success are much more required in this work.

6. If you are not to leave a legacy of chaos behind, you have to make your choice and leave the government of the whole of India including the States to one party. The Constituent Assembly has to provide for the governance even of that part of India which is not represented by the Muslim League or some States.

7. Non-partition of the Punjab and Bengal does not mean that minorities in these Provinces are to be neglected. In both the Provinces they are large and powerful enough to arrest and demand attention. If the popular Governments cannot placate them then the Governors should during the interregnum actively interfere.

8. The intransmissibility of paramountcy is a vicious doctrine if it means that they can become sovereign and a menace for Independent India. All the power wherever exercised by the British in India must automatically descend to its successor. Thus the people of the States become as much part of Independent India as the people of British India. The present Princes are puppets created or tolerated for the upkeep and prestige of the British Power. The unchecked powers exercised by them over their people is probably the worst blot on the British Crown. The Princes under the new regime can exercise only such powers as trustees can and as can be given to them by the Constituent Assembly. It follows that they cannot maintain private armies or arms factories. Such ability and statecraft as they possess must be at the disposal of the Republic and must be used for the good of their

people and the people as a whole. I have merely stated what should be done with the States. It is not for me to show in this letter how this can be done.

9. Similarly difficult but not so baffling is the question of the Civil Service. Its members should be taught from now to accommodate themselves to the new regime. They may not be partisans taking sides. The slightest trace of communalism among them should be severely dealt with. The English element in it should know that they owe loyalty to the new regime rather than to the old and therefore to Great Britain. The habit of regarding themselves as rulers and therefore superiors must give place to the spirit of true service of the people.

## II

10. I had a very pleasant two hours and three quarters with Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah on Tuesday last. We talked about the joint statement on non-violence. He was agreeably emphatic over his belief in non-violence. He has reiterated it in the Press statement which was drafted by him.

11. We did talk about Pakistan and partition. I told him that my opposition to Pakistan persisted as before and suggested that in view of his declaration of faith in non-violence he should try to convert his opponents by reasoning with them and not by show of force. He was, however, quite firm that the question of Pakistan was not open to discussion. Logically, for a believer in non-violence, nothing, not even the existence of God could be outside its scope.

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur saw the first eight paragraphs, the purport of which she was to give to Pandit Nehru with whom I was to send you this letter. But I could not finish it in New Delhi I finished it on the train.

I hope you and Her Excellency are enjoying your hard-earned rest.

To H. E. The Viceroy,  
Simla

Yours sincerely,  
M. K. Gandhi



There was one more attempt which Gandhi made in order to throw the British out of the picture of partition, if he could. There was considerable agitation in Bengal over the proposed partition of India. The public in general were already of opinion that if there was to be partition at all, Bengal should be divided into two, so that districts having a Hindu majority might remain within India.

A new proposal was made about this time by H. S. Suhrawardy, Premier of Bengal, for a separate state of Bengal in which East and West Bengal would remain together. Gandhi examined the proposal carefully, in the hope that if Suhrawardy were serious about it, he would have to woo the Hindu legislators for support. In that event, riots would have to be discontinued, and incidently, a serious blow could be delivered against the Muslim League's two-nation theory.

The attempt did not however succeed, as Suhrawardy's offer of establishing a sovereign Bengal 'by mutual consent' was interpreted by Gandhi to mean that the Hindu and Muslim *legislators, as well as executive*, would have *separately* to decide in favour of the proposal by majority before the step could be given effect to. The story is told in *My Days with Gandhi* by the present author (Bose 1953, 227-237).

### **Gandhi and the Congress Leaders**

It is not impossible that Nehru and others went to consult Gandhi after Mountbatten's proposal had impressed them favourably. Mountbatten had induced them to give him in writing an undertaking that although they did not quite 'agree' that partition was a satisfactory solution, yet they 'accepted' it as the best solution under the circumstances. It was also arranged that after 'acceptance', Patel and Nehru would try to bring round the other members of the Working Committee to their point of view (see Campbell-Johnson 1957, 100). This was on 2 June 1947. On 3 June 1947, the Congress President, J. B. Kripalani, wrote to the Viceroy that there was a general acceptance of the Plan by the whole Working Committee (*ibid.*, 103).

According to Nehru, acceptance would, at least, bring about the end of 'war'. In Gandhi's opinion, it was likely to

be the beginning of war. An internal, domestic problem was likely to be converted into an international problem by means of partition ; and then every interested nation could poke its finger into the pie. His advice naturally was likely to be that the Congress should not give up battle ; but follow him in what he had been trying to do in Noakhali and Bihar, or in the Punjab where he now proposed to proceed. If the defences had given way in places, they had immediately to be attended to, and then, in future, the war of independence had to be re-opened on new fronts.

But the Congress leaders were not likely to feel optimistic. Their fear might reasonably be that any civil disobedience movement under the present circumstances might be undone by communal strife. They did not see how order could be brought out of the possible anarchy and chaos. Gandhi's answer might easily be that India had not yet paid the price of freedom either in toil or in suffering. Just as England retreated for a while before the German onslaught, prepared herself, and then marched into the offensive, so India could, under the present circumstances, retreat into a position as Gandhi had done in Noakhali. And then, as the preparation became sufficient, suitable forms of civil disobedience might be initiated. If the Muslim masses had become hostile now, they could, at least, be rendered neutral in a future offensive campaign by the Congress if they were correctly attended to. This was indeed what Gandhi had been constantly trying to achieve single-handed, in both Noakhali and in Bihar.

But by the time of which we are speaking now, non-violence, as an instrument of collective action, had practically been laid aside by the Congress organization. Ever since 1937, the Congress's politics had approximated more and more closely those of the Liberals; only, it was punctuated from time to time by small agitations and frequent negotiations. But in the present circumstance, the tactical manoeuvres of the Muslim League combined with that of the British had pressed it into a tight corner:

It was evidently in some such state of helplessness that the leaders finally approached Gandhi for an endorsement of

their decision. Their appeal was to Gandhi's compassion rather than to his political sense.

The Working Committee had agreed to accept the British plan of partition on 12-16 June 1947. A meeting of the A. I. C. C. was called on 14-15 June 1947 when the above resolution was endorsed by a majority. A few extracts from the speeches of the leaders are of relevance in this connexion.

The Congress President, J. B. Kripalani, said, 'Today I feel that he (Gandhi with his supreme fearlessness is correct and my stand is defective. Why then am I not with him ? It is because I feel that he has as yet found no way of tackling the problem on a mass scale . . . . He says he is solving the problem of Hindu-Muslim unity for the whole of India in Bihar. May be. But it is difficult to see how this is being done. There are no definite steps, as in non-violent non-co-operation, that lead to the desired goal.

'But then unfortunately for us today, though he can enunciate policies, they have in the main to be carried out by others and these others are not converted to his way of thinking' (*JAR* 1947, I, 125).

Govinda Ballabh Pant said, 'The Congress had worked hard for the sake of unity. But there was a limit beyond which it could not go. The choice today was between accepting the statement of June 3 or committing suicide . . . . it was better to accept the statement of June 3 rather than fritter away their energies in trying to keep unwilling people in the Union' (*ibid.*, 129).

Abul Kalam Azad 'disagreed with Pandit Pant that the June 3 Statement was better than the Cabinet Mission's proposals. He had all along held the view that the May 16 Statement was the best solution of our problems.\* To that view he continued to adhere . . . . He did not think the present decision was the right decision, but the Congress had no alternative. The choice before the Congress was not which plan to accept and which to reject, but whether the present state of indecision and drift should continue. There was the

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\*See particularly Azad 1959, 142-145, 149.

unfortunate problem of internal disorder and strife and there was the obstinacy of the Muslim League. Taking into consideration all factors, the Congress Working Committee came to the decision that an immediate settlement was urgently required and accepted the June 3 Statement. He ended by the observation that 'the division is only of the map of the country and not in the hearts of the people, and I am sure it is going to be a short-lived partition' (ibid., 129-130).

Abdul Ghani said he was sorry that 'the Congress had let down the Pathans and Nationalist Muslims who had fought Pakistan. Why was a referendum not demanded in the Punjab and Bengal also? He was prepared for civil war, but not injustice. "Do not give victory to Mr. Jinnah and those who say Hindusthan for Hindus and Pakistan for Muslims. You will create a lot of aliens among you"' (ibid., 131).

Purushottam Das Tandon remarked : 'The Working Committee had accepted the plan in weakness and out of a sense of despair. At the same time, they expressed the hope that they would later unite. That was dishonest. They had resisted the British before and they could do so again. In support, it had been said that the Congress could not go back on its policy of non-coercion. If that was so what would they say to the States, which expressed their intention to remain independent? There would be numerous pockets of Muslims in India who would say they wanted to go to Pakistan. What would they say to them?' And then Tandon pleaded with the A. I. C. C. to reject the plan of June 3 altogether.

Jawaharlal Nehru spoke as follows : 'It seemed the administration had broken down and there was no authority left in the country to enforce order . . . . The trouble was most prevalent where there were British officers in charge and divisions under the control of either Hindu or Muslim officers were comparatively quiet. The Interim Government was able to do nothing to protect the people . . . . The most urgent task at present was to arrest the swift drift towards anarchy and chaos . . . . Their first task should be the establishment of a strong Central Government to rule the country firmly and to assure individuals liberty of life. All other questions were of

secondary importance. He concluded by saying, "India's heart has been broken, but her essential unity has not been destroyed. How will you repair the broken heart ? It can only be on the basis of a programme for partition." ' (ibid., 133.)

Vallabhbhai Patel said, 'There was a snag in the May 16 Plan. The Plan could not be executed if one or the other party withheld co-operation. Thus the State Paper was in the nature of an imposed award . . . . Nobody liked the division of India and his heart was heavy. But there were stark realities of which they should take notice. *The fight today was not against the British\**. . . . They definitely had no desire to govern this country. Here was a chance for India to attain independence . . . . they had now a great opportunity to develop over three-fourths of India . . . . They (had) worked for independence, and they should see as large a part of the country as possible free and strong . . . . was she going to throw it (the opportunity) away ? Taking any other course than the one which the Working Committee had suggested would not only be injurious, but would also make the Congress the laughing stock of the world' (ibid., 135-136).

It was a delicate and decisive moment for Gandhi. The political leadership which he had exercised for the last twenty-five years through the Congress organization was crumbling to pieces.

One possibility lay in reliance upon the Congress Socialist Party. He could have utilized it as his new instrument of action. There could be nothing morally wrong in the step, as the C. S. P. was a part of the Congress itself. But then the members of the Socialist Party would have to subscribe to non-violence, or, at least, follow its discipline as long as he was at the helm of affairs. But the chances were slender ; not only because the mind of the socialists vacillated between non-violence *and* violence, but also because there might be a feeling among them that the Old Guards would not allow Gandhi to act freely in the manner he might desire.

In any case, we are talking of possibilities only. What actually happened with Gandhi in the decisive meeting of the A. I. C. C. is narrated below. He sensed the helplessness of the Congress leaders. The only alternative, from his point of view, would be an audacious step in satyagraha. What particular form it would take would depend upon the political climate in the people's mind. A bold constructive programme might be undertaken as a prelude to a swift campaign of civil disobedience in future. But one thing was certain, the new course had to be out and out non-violent, in which the initiative had once more to be recovered by the Congress, and not surrendered to either the British or the Muslim League, or their combination, as at present.

And in this non-violence, he began to feel singularly alone. Those who were in opposition to partition were as little believers in his method as his erstwhile companions, namely, Patel, Nehru and Azad. So, he felt it perhaps would be better to support the Old Guards than the new ones. At least, the former were more familiar with his methods; and he might once more exercise some influence over them in favour of non-violence. About the rest, he was not sure.

And thus Gandhi was led to make one of the most extraordinary pronouncements in his entire political career, when he decided to subdue or efface himself completely and allow leaders, who had almost grown up under his tutelage, freedom to go the way they decided best. Only, he would bide his time for a renewed application of mass non-violence. That necessary atmosphere had to grow out of the increasing disappointment of the masses, who were likely to find that very few of their major problems were capable of solution under the present atmosphere of political independence. A condition favourable for mass movement could not be had for the asking. One had to wait patiently. And this is what Gandhi eventually decided to do.

At the All India Congress Committee's meeting on 14 June 1947, Gandhi said that 'the A. I. C. C. had the right to accept or reject the Working Committee's decision. But on this particular occasion he would ask the A. I. C. C. not to

amend the resolution . . . . If the A. I. C. C. felt so strongly on this point that this plan would do injury to the Congress (it had the right ? ) to go back on its word. The consequence of such a rejection would be the finding of a new set of leaders who would constitute not only the Congress Working Committee but also take charge of the Government. If the opponents of the resolution could find such a set of leaders, the A. I. C. C. could then reject the resolution if it so felt. The members of the Working Committee were old and tried leaders who were responsible for all the achievements of the Congress hitherto and in fact they formed the backbone of the Congress and it would be most unwise, if not impossible, to remove them at the present juncture . . . . Out of mistakes, sometimes good emerged. Lord Ramachandra was exiled because of his father's mistake, but ultimately his exile resulted in the defeat of Ravana, the evil . . . . The A. I. C. C., he hoped, was capable of extracting good out of this defective plan even as gold was extracted from earth. The Congress was opposed to Pakistan and he was one of those who steadfastly opposed the division of India. Yet he had come before the A. I. C. C. to urge the acceptance of the resolution' (ibid., 126-127).

And thus it was that finally India came to be divided.

### **The Lone Pilgrim**

Reviewing what the Congress leaders had eventually done (while evidently denying his own responsibility in the matter), Gandhi said shortly after the historic meeting of the A. I. C. C., 'It is permissible to say that India had accepted partition at the point of the bayonet'. With reference to the role of Jinnah and the Muslim League, he observed, 'They had succeeded in compelling consent from the Congress and the Sikhs to the division. The thing that was in itself bad did not become good because the parties concerned accepted it, no matter that the causes dictating were different in each case. It was hardly any comfort that the Qaid-e-Azam did not get all that he wanted. The difference was not at all in kind. He wanted a sovereign State. That he had' in the fullest measure' (Bose 1953, 247, 246.)

With reference to the British, he said one evening : 'Man had the supreme knack of deceiving himself. The Englishman was supremest among men. He was quitting because he had discovered that it was wrong on economic and political grounds to hold India in bondage. Herein he was quite sincere. It would not be denied, however, that sincerity was quite consistent with self-deception. He was self-deceived in that he believed that he could not leave India to possible anarchy if such was to be India's lot. He was quite content to leave India as a cockpit between two organized armies. Before quitting, he was setting the seal of approval on the policy of playing off one community against another' (ibid., 248).

About the Congress leaders, his opinion was : 'The leaders had agreed to partition as the last resort. They did not feel that they had made a mistake. Rather than let the whole country to go to the dogs, they had agreed to partition, hoping to give the country a much-needed rest.'

And then he set forth his personal views. 'He felt differently. He had said that he would rather let the whole country be reduced to ashes than yield an inch to violence'. Non-violence was his creed. With the Congress, it was no more than a policy which could be set aside, when necessary. He admitted his mistake in having regarded the resistance of the Congress as stemming from true non-violence. 'I thought that our struggle was based on non-violence, whereas in reality it was no more than passive resistance which essentially is a weapon of the weak. It leads naturally to armed resistance whenever possible' (*H*, vol. xi, 253).

In spite of practical self-suppression at the A. I. C. C. meeting on 14 June 1947, Gandhi's mind did not remain idle. He continued to suggest ways and means so that the partition could yet be undone. But now his appeal was not so much to the leaders as to the *people of India* directly.

On the very next day, 15 June 1947, he said, 'It was open to the Hindus, the Muslims and the Sikhs and all the other



communities even now to come together and treat the Vice-regal document of 3rd June as a scrap of paper in so far as further steps were concerned. It did nothing but register an agreement between the Congress and the League. It was an agreement which neither party liked. The Congress spokesmen had made it clear that they could not be willing partners in any division of India. Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah did not show enthusiasm about the agreement in as much as Bengal and the Punjab were to be partitioned. In whatever direction he looked, the only way he could see through the surrounding darkness was that all the parties should come together and evolve a concerted plan so as to prevent further friction and further bloodshed' (ibid., 203-204).

A correspondent pleaded with him to lead an opposition to the proposed partition. His reply was, 'when public opinion was against him, was he to coerce it ? . . . Why could not the writer see the obvious ? The country, i.e. the vocal part of it was with them (the Congress leaders) . . . . He made bold to say that if only non-Muslim India was with him, he could show the way to end the proposed partition. But he freely admitted that he had become *or was rather considered\** a back number' (ibid., 202).

In one desperate moment, he also recommended the supreme remedy in terms of non-violence. But he recognized at once that it was a recommendation of the impossible. On 13 July 1937, he said, 'One easy and ready way out is for the Congress and the League to come together and arrive at a mutual understanding without the intervention of the Viceroy. The League has to make the first move. I do not at all suggest the undoing of Pakistan. Let that be treated as an established fact beyond dispute or discussion. But they can sit together in a mud hut large enough to accommodate not more than ten representatives and undertake not to part till they have reached an agreement. I dare swear that if such an event occurs, it will be infinitely better than the Bill recognizing the Independence of India cut up into two States

\*Italics, present author's.

enjoying equal status . . . . But—it is a big *but*—I seem to be aiming at the impossible. Now that British intervention has done the trick, how can the League be expected to come down to their adversaries and produce an agreed settlement as between brothers and friends ?' (ibid, 241).

Then he tried to formulate an equally desperate appeal addressed to the people in general 'Will the vast mass of the Hindus and those who had joined them in the struggle for Independence realize the danger in its proper perspective and rise to the occasion and swear even now that they do not wish to have any army at all or at least refuse ever to use it against their Muslim brethren whether in the Union or outside it in Pakistan ? The proposal is tantamount to asking the Hindus and their associates to turn thirty years' weakness into strength of great beauty. Perhaps to state the problem thus is to demonstrate its absurdity—may be God has been known before now to turn man's folly into wisdom. The effort is worth making for the sake of all the parties who have subscribed to the dangerous division of the army into two self-destroying warring camps' (ibid., 241-242).

### 15 August 1947

The partition of India was yet to come on the 15th of August, 1947. And the week before that found Gandhi once more in Bengal where he repaired in order to nurse the wounds left behind.

An information officer of the Government of India approached him for a message to be broadcast on the eventful day. But Gandhi's curt reply was that he had no message at all to give, 'everything had dried up'. On 11 August 1947, a representative of the British Broadcasting Corporation came to his camp at Sodpur for the same purpose. When the present writer approached Gandhi with his request, the reply was, 'Why should they come to me ? Ask them to go to Jawaharlal.' When this was conveyed to the officer, he pleaded, 'Who else except Mahatma Gandhi can speak on behalf of India ?' He added that the message would be translated into many languages, and broadcast all over the world

from London. On hearing this, Gandhi picked up a small bit of paper on which he wrote, 'I must not yield to the temptation. They must forget that I know English.'

On the previous day, the Congress Ministers of Bengal, to whom charge was to be made over by the League Government on the 15th, came to see him for advice as to how the day was to be celebrated. At the moment, Gandhi lay half reclined on a pillow. When the question was placed before him, he sat up and in an excited tone said, '*Sab dik taraf jal rahe hain, nange aur bhukhe mar rahe hain*' (The whole country is on fire! Men are dying for want of clothes and of food!); this was no time for rejoicing. His only advice to them was to *fast*, pray and dedicate themselves to the spinning wheel' (Bose 1953, 256).

Indeed, as India became independent on the 15th of August, and as the dividing lines within Bengal and the Punjab were announced within a few days, there began an orgy of violence which eventually sent more than ten million people trekking for safety from one part of the country to another. This has been regarded as the largest movement of population within historic times; and it has also been estimated that nearly 600,000 lives were lost on account of the accompanying violence. (see Menon 1957, 417-435).

The Army was helpless, and so was the Administration. And this is how freedom came at a moment when Gandhi's non-violence had been laid aside, both in principle and in practice, by the political parties which rode into power.

### After Independence

Gandhi alone ploughed his lonely furrow. His faith seemed to burn brighter than ever. If there had been failures, they were due to fault of the instrument rather than the principle. (*H*, vol. xi, 205.)

Shortly after the 15th, Calcutta was once more on the verge of a recrudescence of communal riots. These had been stilled for a while under Gandhi's influence just before the historic date. But the signs became ominous about a fortnight

after. Two young Muslims were killed in Gandhi's presence by a bomb-throw. Gandhi was determined to prevent the riots from spreading any further. And so he decided to enter upon another indefinite fast.

On hearing the news, the Governor of Bengal, C. Rajagopalachari, came to see him immediately and tried to dissuade him from his resolve. His argument was that the new Government should be given a chance ; for they were as determined as he was in quelling the disturbances. But Gandhi asked him in reply, 'What should I do in the meanwhile ? Have I no duty as a citizen ?'

Then Rajagopalachari tried to apply a subtler argument. He suggested that Gandhi was evidently moved by vanity. He had become intoxicated with the success of a few days ago, and had begun to feel that the Government could not do what he could by means of his influence over the masses. Gandhi remained silent for a few moments, and then in a quiet tone said that his fast had not been prompted by subtle pride. His object was to appeal to the good people of Calcutta to arouse themselves and work for peace. Good was always hesitant in contrast with evil. And if the heart of the good could not be touched by his fast, he would rather prefer to die.\*

So the fast began. And in a few days' time, strange things began to happen. Leaders belonging to all communities stirred themselves, and peace was eventually restored. In the meanwhile, a few young men like Sachin Mitra and Smritish Banerjee had responded to the call of Gandhi and walked into the midst of turbulent Muslim crowds in order to argue with them for peace. Both were stabbed grievously, while some of their companions escaped with lighter wounds. When the news of their death reached Gandhi, he felt happy in his own way : India had not been wanting in men who were prepared to pay the highest price for peace.

After quiet had thus been restored Gandhi decided to proceed to the Punjab (see Manu Gandhi 1962, 107). On the

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\*For the position of 'Fasting in Satyagraha' see appendix to this chapter.

way, he tarried for a while in Delhi. The Prime Minister of India, however, felt that it would be too risky to allow him to proceed to West Pakistan. Moreover, his presence in Delhi itself was indispensable (*ibid.*, 259).

So the days rolled by.

In the meanwhile, as more and more refugees poured in from West Pakistan, the atmosphere of Delhi became surcharged with tension. Every day, Gandhi pleaded with his audience after prayer to devote themselves to building up a new India. People came to listen to him as they listen to a holy man. But his voice seemed to have lost its magic appeal. It appeared that all dependence was now placed upon the Government, and people had lost their former habit of depending upon themselves. Instead of trying to establish peace by means of their own effort, the 'Army had become enshrined almost as a new god' (*cf. ibid.*, 75).

While reviewing India's practice of non-violence in the past, Gandhi said one day that he had originally mistaken it for non-violence of the right kind. But subsequently the discovery had been made that it was no more than passive resistance of the weak who are unable, not unwilling, to offer armed resistance. In consequence, the two parts of India were now engaged in mutual strife so that they were unable 'to think urgently of the food and clothing of the hungry and naked millions who know no religion but that of the one and only God who appears to them in the guise of the necessities of life' (*H*, vol. xi, 251).

Sometimes he was almost overcome by impatience. 'The Congress seemed to stand for projects of industrialization in which he saw no deliverance for the masses from their grinding poverty. He did not believe in mill-made civilization as he did not believe in mill-made cloth. He did not believe in an army for the removal of the menace to the real freedom of the country . . . He felt that he must be steadfast in the midst of the fire raging round him' (*ibid.*, 194).

And thus Gandhi bided his time, so that when the excitement of independence slowly wore away, people would begin to realize that without economic and social freedom, political freedom was only an empty husk. These freedoms were harder

to attain, if only because they were less exciting. But one had to wait patiently until the objective conditions became propitious before a new move could be planned under non-violence.

In the meanwhile, he was not oblivious of more urgent problems nearer home. Communal relations in Delhi were on the decline ; and he went on his last fast on 13 January 1948 in order to appeal to the conscience of popular leaders and of those who held the reins of government in their hands in order to stimulate them to do their best for restoration of communal harmony.

Somehow the feeling gained ground that Gandhi was more solicitous of the welfare of Muslims, for which he was even prepared to sacrifice legitimate Hindu interests. On 20 January 1947, a bomb was hurled by a young man upon his prayer ground ; but fortunately no one was hurt.

When Gandhi realized that the missile had been meant for him, the thought of death, and the urgency of finishing unaccomplished tasks came back to him with great force. A beautiful and poignant picture of those days has been furnished by Manu Gandhi in her *Last Glimpses of Bapu*. In it we realize how the thought of death began to come to him repeatedly as a supreme challenge. And every moment of the last ten days since the bomb had been thrown was spent in the reorganization of his faith.

The 26th of January came as a reminder of India's resolution to achieve Independence. Perhaps that day also offered him a new call to duty. The sands of time were fast running out, and he braced himself up for the final venture of his life.

The plan was to wind up camp in Delhi and proceed to Sevagram on the 2nd of the following month. Things had to be put in order there before he could undertake another India-wide pilgrimage when he could attune himself to the heart-beat of the nation. Then it would be time for deciding upon the succeeding step

On 29 January 1948, he wrote out his advice to the Congress to go into voluntary liquidation. Its political objective had been attained, and it was now time for congressmen to devote themselves wholly to the education and organization of the masses for Swaraj.

But the Fates seemed to have decided otherwise. On the 30th, during prayer hour, as he walked across a garden to the meeting place, a young man shot him dead. Perhaps his feeling was that he was hereby removing the greatest obstacle to the path of the Hindus becoming a powerful, militant nation.

### Epilogue

All his life, Gandhi had striven so that power would eventually come within the grasp of the masses. His aim had been to fashion out of non-violence an instrument by means of which even ordinary men and women could, by collective enterprise, gain and preserve their freedom. And through such endeavour, each of those who participated would become individually more and more perfect.

For the execution of his aim, he had chosen India's foremost democratic organization, the Congress, and had also substantially helped in broadening its base during the long years of his association with it. But those who had borne him company had been attracted more by his courage and spiritual identification with the country's crowded humanity than by his ideology. Non-violence, on its own account, had held no appeal for them, except occasionally in its negative aspect as an absence of violence, and an instrument of decent, gentlemanly behaviour. They had voyaged with the Captain, but disembarked at wayside havens when the power to shape India's destiny seemed to have come within their grasp. The Captain had felt more and more solitary. And in those last days, one of the hymns which had given him spiritual solace had been a song from Tagore, *Ekla chalo re!* 'Pilgrim! dare to walk alone!'

But aloneness had never held any terrors for him. Indeed, he had found solace within its embrace. And just as he tried to step out of the neglect of his erstwhile

companions into the challenge of fresh duties in new India, on a sacred Friday, the Fates overtook him, and he lay upon Mother Earth with the name of God upon his lips.

The supreme apostle of non-violence in the modern age died when his creed had been thrice denied. And perhaps it was the height of tragedy when his erstwhile companions so arranged that his mortal remains should be carried in a gun-carriage over which military bombers hovered and dipped low in ostentatious salute.

Perhaps non-violence which thus became enshrined by his martyrdom into a seed, will one day spring into life once more, when, not individuals like Socrates or Gandhi would be its lonely representatives, but when it will spring into life in the garden of a million souls, and offer solace and strength to a restless, unhappy, and frightened family of man.

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**APPENDIX****FASTING IN SATYAGRAHA\***

Many people look upon fasting as a means of political coercion. When Gandhi was on fast during his detention at the Aga Khan Palace, the Secretary of the Home Department of the Government of India described it as a form of political blackmail. Gandhi, however, insisted upon describing it as an integral part of satyagraha, as an action which sprang from the depths of anguished love.

Of course, there is difference between fasting and fasting. Pundit Ramrakha, Jatin Das and Terence MacSwiney laid down their lives by fasting, and were regarded as martyrs by their countrymen. In 1932, Gandhi vowed to fast unto death unless the Hindus reformed themselves and did justice to the so-called 'untouchable' castes. His determination moved the whole Hindu world; and suitable steps were taken so that Gandhi's life was saved. In 1947, again, he fasted once more in Calcutta when it was passing through a period of civil strife; and this too bore fruit. It is necessary to examine the distinction between the two types of fasting described above.

\*Revised from article published in *The Modern Review*, October 1950.

Perhaps the chief difference lies in the intention. The aim of Pundit Ramrakha, Jatin Das or Terence MacSwiney did not lie in the conversion of their adversaries. They were at war, and found themselves in prison under conditions which were regarded as dishonourable. They refused to live in disgrace; and their fine sense of honour led them to lay down their lives when honour could not be recovered otherwise. The death of these brave soldiers of freedom was thus comparable to the *hara-kiri* of Japanese soldiers.

Gandhi's fasts, to which reference has been made, were of a very different order. The aim of a satyagrahi is to convert an opponent, and not to coerce him. When Gandhi was on fast in September 1947, friends argued with him that his fast, even if it ended in death, would leave no impression upon anti-social elements which were responsible for communal riots at the time. Gandhi agreed that in satyagraha a fast cannot be undertaken against one who considers the satyagrahi as his enemy. On several previous occasions, he had said in Noakhali that he could not go on a fast for correcting the Mussalmans of Noakhali who had been responsible for wrongs against the local Hindus. He could plead with them, and at the same time serve them in many ways and thus try to convert them so that they would begin to regard him as their friend. Only after gaining that status would he be entitled to fast against them, if a suitable occasion presented itself. It was indeed with that object that Gandhi left Noakhali for Bihar from where reports had been pouring in that justice was being denied to the Muslims by the Congress administration. He wanted to prove that he was a friend of Muslims as much as of anyone else.

It was for a similar reason that Gandhi befriended the Muslims of Calcutta when, after experiencing one year's abuse of administration under the Muslim League government, the Hindus retaliated when the Congress party came into power in Bengal. This service, in Gandhi's opinion, gave him a right to fast against the Mussalmans of Bengal, as his identification with the Hindus had already given him the right to fast against the latter.

During the September Fast in Calcutta, Gandhi clearly recognized that his fast might have little effect upon turbulent elements responsible for disturbances. Someone therefore asked him, what was then the object of his vow to fast unto death ? He explained that the fast was directed against his *friends*, both Hindu and Muslim. Society was not merely made up of those who were turbulent ; there were many good men in it too. But good generally lies dormant. Through inaction, it helps evil to play a dominant role. Good people had to assert themselves and actively non-co-operate with evil. If non-co-operation were wise and energetically pursued, the evil elements would find themselves isolated in the end. And that would lead to the withdrawal of his determination to die.

The question however remained, if the forces of good asserted themselves only now and then, specially when the life of a respected leader like Gandhi was at stake, would it be worth while to sacrifice life for such temporary gain ? Gandhi's reply was that if such spasmodic goodness was all that could be evoked in the world around, he would be content to die rather than continue to live in a world where he was useless. Perhaps after his death, those who had come in intimate contact with him would become active, vigilant, and continuously so. The purpose of his death would be served because the good in society would have then shed its present sluggishness and become roused to activity. Evil would then be isolated ; and that is the utmost that a satyagrahi can expect as a practical result.

It is this intention of conversion or stimulation of a friend to redoubled activity which distinguishes the fast of a satyagrahi from the other type, of an equally high order, which have made the names of Pundit Ramrakha, Jatin Das or Terence MacSwiney immortal. One belongs to the world of satyagraha, while the other belongs to a different order characterized by an equally intense courage and total dedication to a superior cause.



## CHAPTER NINE

### GANDHI AND LENIN\*

In the midst of the gloom which encircles mankind on all sides, there are always men who struggle with the surrounding darkness and succeed in saving their souls from its oppressive influence. Of such men in the present age, we can think of two who carry the marks of having successfully fought the battle, and whose lives bear testimony to the enormity of the suffering they have undergone. Lenin and Gandhi. Both these men resemble one another in their tireless pursuit of Truth, as well as in their great passion for the poor and the oppressed portion of humanity. Yet, in the matter of their inner convictions and attitudes, they differ as widely from one another as possible.

According to both Lenin and Gandhi, the world's suffering is mostly caused by the existence of an unjust social system which allows one class of men to live upon the toils of another. The system not only blights the lives of those who are exploited, but also degrades those who live upon the toil of others. It has therefore to be destroyed if we want men to gain the opportunity of free and full exercise of their talents. In this, both Gandhi and Lenin agree. But it is with regard to the means, as well as the mental attitude which they bring to bear upon their task that the two drift completely away from one another.

Lenin was of opinion that the unjust social and economic system exists today because the exploiters hold the power of the State in their hands. If that power can be transferred to the exploited by means of a revolution, then they can so build society anew that a continuance of the present wrongs will

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\*Written in gaol in 1932 ; published in the *Voice of Youth*, 28 July 1933. The original form has been retained as far as possible.

become impossible. All his endeavours were therefore directed towards securing such a revolution as would bring the State under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Under that dictatorship, property relations will be entirely recast, men's outlook on life reshaped by education, and no scope left anywhere for the exercise of the former desire to exploit.

Gandhi however holds quite another view. He is opposed fundamentally to the coercive centralization involved in Lenin's scheme. He is of opinion that such coercion will only perpetuate the passive aspect of human character on which the structure of capitalism itself is based today. He believes that the root of the problem does not lie in the authority of the State, but in the character of the individual which has made the existence of the State possible. Those who rule, do so because others are afraid of violence all the time. Therefore, we can enjoy the right of freedom only if we cast the fear which lies buried in our heart, and, at the same time, labour with our hands for the production of our daily bread. All his efforts are therefore directed towards bringing about the necessary change in individual character ; and this he proposes to do by his constructive economic and social programme, on the one hand, and by non-violent non-co-operation, which advances by progressive stages, on the other.

But what will be the shape of things when labouring humanity succeeds in reorganizing social life completely by means of its own effort and the help of those who cast in their lot with the former ? Gandhi has said that inequalities of wealth, power and position will be equalized to the utmost extent practicable. But even when man-made inequalities have been completely reduced, there will remain certain inequalities due to nature. These should not be interfered with if they are beneficial ; only, they should not be turned into a justification for the formation of privileged classes. To prevent exploitation arising out of natural inequalities, it is necessary to do something more. Every man should be inspired with the idea that whatever his special talents may be, they should be turned to social use and not to personal advantage. This is true of individuals as much as of nations ; every one

should place his resources and his abilities at the service of humanity taken as a whole. The aim of those who employ satyagraha in order to convert either individuals or communities, should be to convert them into this ideal of common possession and of trusteeship.

The wide divergence between Lenin and Gandhi with regard to the means, as set forth above, springs ultimately from a fundamental difference in their opinion regarding the role played by the individual in human history. Lenin held that, in spite of rare exceptions, men are mostly creatures of circumstance ; so that if they are to be made moral, they should be placed under circumstances which render a particular moral code imperative. His principal endeavour was therefore to build up an architectural system of the necessary kind. But Gandhi has little faith in good life based principally upon compulsion or habit, if it is blind. Such morality, in his opinion, fails to develop the best of which the human personality is capable. Really fruitful change can only come from within ; and the principal object of social change should therefore be to bring it into being through change already wrought in the individual. All change in outward form should be an expression, as well as a measure, of the degree of inner progress attained. We may describe the difference between Lenin and Gandhi by saying that the former builds his plans on man as he actually is today, while the latter bases his upon what it is possible or desirable for him to be.

Lenin was like a mighty warrior who held aloft a great hope for mankind, while his soul was steeped in the dream of a millenium when no man would live in cruelty and idleness but in love, and actively employ his talents for the service of mankind. With his strong taste for reality, he turned to History for a sanction of the hope which swelled within his bosom ; and there he discovered the finger of Fate pointing towards such fulfilment as he desired for mankind. It was because of the fatalistic nature of this belief that Lenin could employ the most ruthless weapons of destruction in order to overcome the obstacles which came in his way. The path, he thought, may lie today through violence and hatred, but the day will surely

dawn when it will be time to lay down the sword, or perhaps melt it for building the plough, for then man will have no reason to hate man. But until that day arrives, our path must lie through violence and bloodshed, for that is the inevitable law of History. Lenin was like a workman, passionately hammering away at the anvil at night, in the glow of a lamp which he had lighted out of his own heart's desire, while he was oblivious of the dark sky which hung over his head. And in that sky, the cold stars shone with a glitter which knew no compassion either for the love or the hate which alternately burned within the bosom of the workman.

But Gandhi, the pilgrim soul, is ceaselessly on the march in a journey which seems to be without end. With the staff of the traveller in his hand, he moves towards a distant light which guides him inexorably towards itself. Hope burns in his bosom, and he yields to its impulse, for there is nothing else for him to do. In the inner depth of his being, he knows, it is not his business to enquire if ever the millenium will come or not. All that he is called upon to do is to submit, at the present moment, to the forces of his purified nature and thus fulfil the task for which he was appointed by God. It is his ideal 'to become merely like a lump of clay in the Potter's divine hands'. And this is also the reason why he can say in true humility that his task is the 'service of God and therefore of humanity'.

Gandhi believes that God never admits us into the design of the future. He has given us no control over the end, and only a limited one over the means; and the means is love. And Gandhi claims that he has discovered the secret whereby love can be employed to transform one's environment and free human life from the oppression which weighs down upon it from all sides. That secret is to love the oppressors of mankind as oneself, even when we are opposing them by militant non-co-operation in order to end the system which has so far been built upon injustice. We seek to transform the mutual relationship between the exploiter and the exploited; and this will eventually lead to the extinction of the present system by common effort, and the creation of a new order

based upon transformed social relationship. It is a terribly difficult adventure to which Gandhi invites us, to oppose a tyrant while bearing no malice, but positive love and respect for his personality in our hearts. But as this is the noblest way, Gandhi asks us to spare no pains in following it to perfection. All his genius is exercised in discovering this path of non-violent non-co-operation in order to remedy wrongs ; the results he leaves to the keeping of God.

But weak as we are, our strength fails us when we are confronted by the heights to which we are expected to rise. We find that Gandhi's absolute insistence upon the means often leaves us despairing of our own weaknesses. So we turn to him and ask him if it is wrong to be intoxicated with a dream and a hope when darkness presses upon our soul from all around. Gandhi answers : Indeed you should believe in the promise of the day when man shall disdain to enrich himself at the cost of his neighbour, but live instead by means of Work and Love. In the meanwhile, he asks us to take care of the means, to guide our next step in accordance with our own strength, with single-mindedness in the direction of universal good and of complete human brotherhood.

Secretly, to the chosen few who can bear it, he whispers a less luring truth. To them Gandhi says that the promise of the dawn is but the bait with which God tempts His creatures to action, along paths which He chooses. And if He so wills, He may anyday sweep aside all our hopes and joys and hurl us into the depths of unutterable misery, for He is above all the greatest Tyrant ever known. Our business is to toil unceasingly at our appointed task, and throw ourselves against every obstacle which oppresses human life without regard to consequences. We belong to the gang of workmen employed to keep the road ready for God's chariot to pass by. Even with regard to his motherland, he says that it is true that he wants his countrymen to enjoy political freedom, he wants food and raiment for the hungry millions, but these are only the things with which India will clothe herself before she is called upon, in the interest of humanity, to embrace death as her divine bridegroom. 'My idea of nationalism is that my

country may become free that, if need be, the whole country may die so that the human races may live.'

These are indeed awful words. But Gandhi consoles us by saying that the powers of patience which reside within the human soul are also of unlimited measure. If we throw aside all attachment to the flesh, which is the root of all fear, and have our being in God who is the repository of all strength, we shall never lack in the necessary strength to bear His message of love in our lives.

This is the prospect which Gandhi holds before his comrades; no vision of any distant millenium, but only a vision of the thorns which we shall encounter in our pilgrim's march. He shows us only the way, even while seeking it himself whereby we can lay down our lives so that humanity may live. And in that path, God Himself is transformed into the Flaming Sword which leaps and plays over the road of thorns. The sole aim of our existence is to surrender ourselves to that Almighty Being. Our own joys and sorrows sink into the uttermost insignificance, while life and death are transformed into so many milestones in our lonesome march.

This ultimate acceptance of the permanent nature of that which we call sorrow and suffering, and from which we shrink instinctively, does not spring in Gandhi from any inner morbidity of spirit. It comes from a recognition of the fact that both light and darkness, life and death, are parts of one Universal Being which we may not accept in fragments. It is this aspect of Gandhi, with its apotheosis of labour and of suffering, which drew forth the instinctive repulsion of the poet Tagore, whose admirable temper was now and then ruffled by the prospect of a flood of morbidity overcoming the land in the wake of Gandhi's political movement of 'non-co-operation'. But in Gandhi himself, there is not the least trace of morbidity; for his whole soul has been bathed clean by the tears of humble admission of weakness before God. Love of man has given him the strength to bless all sufferings which come in its train; indeed it is the same kind of heroism which a mother displays when her child is torn out of her being.

If that be the character of Gandhi's philosophy, devoid of hope, of romance, how is it, one may ask, that men follow him in thousands even when he calls upon them to proceed to the portals of death? The secret lies in the character and personality of the man in which his philosophy has clothed itself, rather than in any direct appeal which lies in that philosophy. And here perhaps we reach the inner truth of the present revolution in India, as we also do of all those great movements which have affected the human family in the past. Russia today is inexplicable except in terms of Lenin, the movement of Christ except with reference to the personality of Jesus, while India's satyagraha is likewise understandable only with reference to the character of the man who stands at the head of the movement today.

A lone man marching with set purpose upon the road of God; whose heart beats in unison with every sorrow in the human breast; determined to share all suffering and degradation, and ready to sacrifice himself in the effort to eradicate all that oppresses human life; but who is never prepared to betray the sacred trust of human unity even for the sake of temporary gain; such a character holds an appeal and an encouragement far greater than the cold star of truth towards which the pilgrim may be marching himself. It is only when the light of the stars shines forth through the life of a man that we can feel its glow and light our own life's path by means of its radiance.

It is good to live at a time when such men are born on earth; for their living testimony to the might of the human spirit restores to us faith and gives us the strength to hope afresh and try to build the world anew.















